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First Session, 41st Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 18 November 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

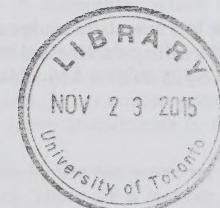
Première session, 41^e législature

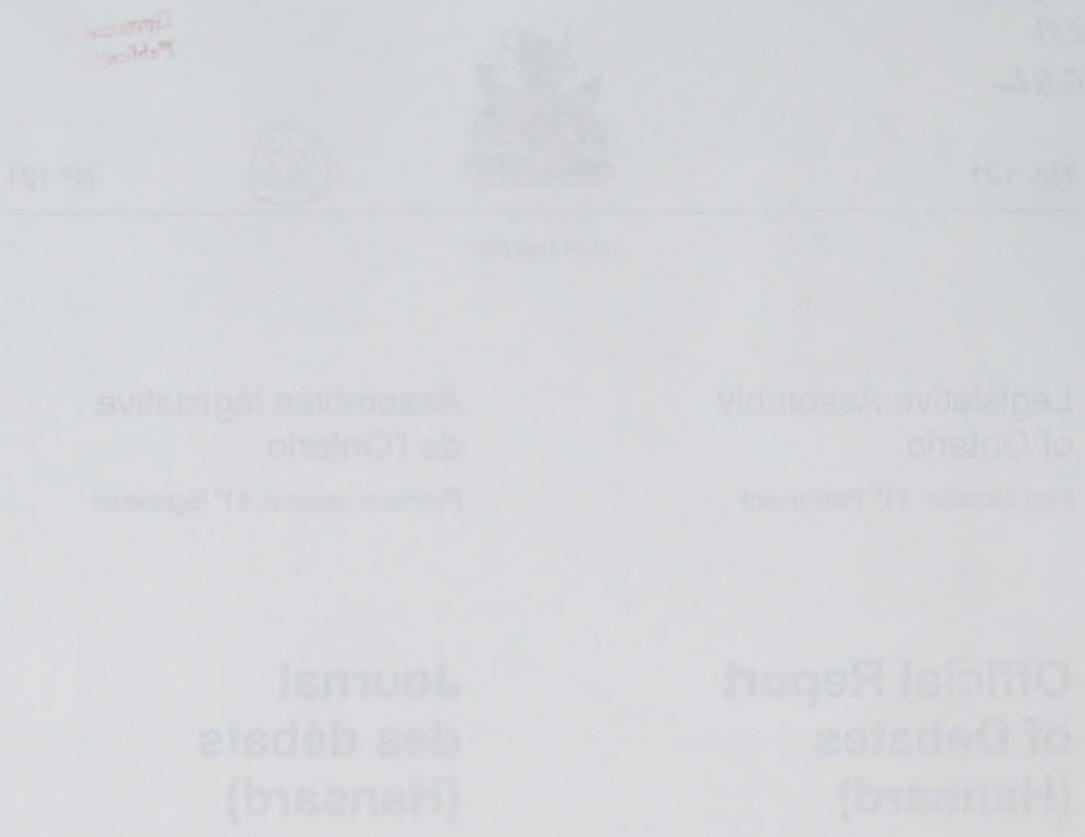
Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 18 novembre 2015

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller





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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sorry to interrupt. I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A quorum count, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A quorum is present. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, Ontario's Mental Health Act provides for involuntary detention of patients in psychiatric facilities where patients present a risk of harm to themselves or to others. The Ontario Court of Appeal addressed the involuntary admission and detention of patients under the Mental Health Act and said that part of the act was inconsistent with section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, in partnership with the Ministry of the Attorney General, has reviewed the act and consulted with stakeholders on proposed amendments. These amendments would, if passed, ensure that the Mental Health Act aligns with the charter and, at the same time, enhance the rights of involuntary long-term patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care consulted with key stakeholders during the development of this

bill. The ministry has discussed the Court of Appeal decision with the CCB, the ORB and the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, and asked for their thoughts on any amendments. Additionally, the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council, which includes people with lived experience and family members, was consulted.

Speaker, during second reading debate we've heard opposition members express their support for this important legislation. The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills said, "It is impressive and positive that we're doing this much.... We support this bill, Mr. Speaker. We look forward ... to doing more positive things like we're speaking of today, and I applaud the government for doing what is right."

Additionally, the member for Toronto-Danforth said, "We agree it's time to amend the Mental Health Act to comply with the Court of Appeal ruling which found that portions of the act violate patients' rights under the charter." The member for Kitchener-Waterloo added, "This is October 2015, and we are just getting to this piece of legislation. It needs to be accelerated. There is an urgency to not acting. There's a cost to not acting."

We couldn't agree more with that member's sense of urgency. It is very important that we move this bill through the legislative process as quickly as possible.

Speaker, we allowed debate to continue when we reached six and a half hours of debate on this bill, so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill. This bill has now seen over 10 hours of debate, and according to my count, we have had over 60 members speak to the bill. There has been considerable debate on this bill, and we have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives.

It's time that the bill is put to a vote for second reading and hopefully referred to committee, where important work takes place. In committee, members of all parties will hear from stakeholders that have an interest in this bill. Members of the public will be able to provide their important input on this bill. In committee, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to strengthen the bill.

At the same time, this House can move on to debate other substantive matters. There are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced that the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process, including Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act; Bill 119, the Health Information Protection Act; Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act; and Bill 135, the Energy Statute

Law Amendment Act. We'd like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we can't until Bill 122 is referred to committee for further review. As a result, I move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has moved that the question now be put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow the question to be put to this House. There has been seven hours of debate, 32 members have spoken on this—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, over 10 hours.

Is it the pleasure of the House that—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I heard a no. All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be deferred until after question period.

Vote deferred.

ENERGY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe the official opposition has the floor.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The third party? Now I've been told it's the third party. Which one is it?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill this morning. This bill is a product of its times, and those times have to be discussed first to understand the bill and its ramifications. This is a time of privatization of our electricity system, a time of soaring prices for electricity consumers, a time of tighter and tighter centralization of decision-making, and a time of increased activity on the part of the government to appear open while in fact veiling government decision-making and removing key information and processes from public scrutiny.

I want to outline my main concerns with this bill, and then I'll go into further detail in the body of my presentation.

With Bill 135, the government has officially abandoned, once and for all, the vision of an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process that had been established in 2004. People need to see this bill as a very substantial move from all the at least statutory provisions for power planning that existed in the past. This is a dramatic move. I don't know quite how the government will characterize it when it puts out its advertising campaign on the wonders of this decision, but frankly, this means very substantial change for the people of Ontario.

By removing their planning and approval authority and relegating the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator to the role of simply implementing the government's plan, it will become even easier for private interests to lobby the government to approve costly and risky energy projects without being subject to any further independent public scrutiny. This brings the curtain down on power planning and opens the curtain to all kinds of power-plan marketing.

People need to understand that with this bill the citizens of Ontario will see a substantial withdrawal of their power to intervene and have an impact on government policy. For the third time this year, the government is using progressive policy items—in this case, energy efficiency improvements—to cover changes that upend electricity policy in Ontario without public review and with unknown impact.

0910

Speaker, as I will explore further along this morning, this government has never been truly committed to an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process. Not a single integrated power system plan has ever been approved in Ontario, despite the law mandating that one be approved and updated every three years. In fact, this government has ignored its own laws and has set up ad hoc processes for power planning. Some of the most substantial decisions in the life of this province—done behind closed cabinet doors, not in the open, not subject to public scrutiny, not subject to public examination.

The government refused to submit its Hydro One privatization scheme to the Ontario Energy Board for review—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a little loud, folks. We've got six different discussions going on. I'm having trouble hearing him. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government refused to submit its Hydro One privatization scheme to the Ontario Energy Board for review or even disclose the analyses that were prepared for the Ed Clark panel, even though the process leading to the privatization decision was supposed to be "transparent, professional and independently validated." This government claims to be committed to

transparency and independent review, but its actions show that the opposite is true, especially when it comes to energy policy.

The fact that the privatization of Hydro One, with huge potential implications for energy rates, electricity rates in Ontario, was not subject to the OEB was as telling as any other action that this government could take. The fact that its background analyses were not made available to any legislator in this chamber or to our Financial Accountability Officer says that this government has no interest in the public actually having the ability to coldly, analytically assess what they've put forward and deal with the problems that arise before the government actually implements the plan. They have no interest in that.

As flawed as the current energy planning and approval system is—and no one will argue that it is without flaw—at least the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board processes have mandatory hearings and disclosures, which guarantee some transparency and accountability. Evidence can be tested and witnesses cross-examined. With Bill 135, this transparency and accountability will be lost.

The government will say that it will engage in wide-ranging consultation, and I guess it remains to be seen how wide-ranging it is, but I'm fairly sure that public gatherings will be held, documents will be presented, people will be allowed to speak. But people will not actually be able to do what's critical, and that is, through advocates, through intervenors, through their legislators, put the decision-makers on a witness stand, under oath, to answer questions about their assumptions and their actions with regard to electricity planning. That, Speaker, will be gone. Instead, citizens will be given a process where they're allowed to speak but where they're not allowed to question, and that lack of questioning, that lack of disclosure, is a fundamental problem with what this bill proposes.

If the Ontario Energy Board is supposed to protect Ontarians from rising rates demanded by a privatized Hydro One, then why is the government again undermining the Ontario Energy Board's independence and regulatory authority? We've heard day after day, in questions about the sale of Hydro One, that of course the regulator would have the power to call the new owners to account, of course the regulator would have the ability to stop unreasonable rate increases. But that presumes an Ontario Energy Board that has some independence, that has some ability to get at the major decisions of the day. This law, this bill, withdraws that power, undermines the government's argument that the regulator can protect Ontarians from unreasonable price increases—simple as that.

In 2006, the government relegated the Ontario Energy Board to the role of implementing ministerial directives related to the smart metering initiative, with no independent public scrutiny. As a result—and I will expand on this as I go further into my speech—Ontarians wound up with a \$2-billion boondoggle. Smart meters were supposed to

substantially cut the peak power that was used in Ontario. And if that, in fact, had been the case, it would have allowed reduction in costs for gas peaker plants. It didn't do that. We spent \$2 billion, with virtually no savings, and, frankly, opening the door to a variety of cyber security and privacy problems that this government has yet to address.

The government ignored the Ontario Energy Board as a regulator when it brought in smart meters, and now the government is trying to do the same thing with the entire transmission sector—a transmission sector that will be dominated, that will be owned, by private investors who have been promised billions of dollars' worth of expansion opportunities. This government is opening the door to even bigger boondoggles than the one we've seen in the past.

So let's go back. Let's go back to context and look first at privatization. Our electricity system has been subjected to a process of ongoing privatization since the Eves-Harris government in the 1990s changed the structure of the electricity system, decided to lease out Bruce nuclear to a private operator—and, by the way, an operator that in the UK went bankrupt at about that time and had to be bailed out by the UK government. The Liberals have continued the Conservative policies, so that as almost all new generation has been built in Ontario, it's been privately owned and, in many cases—in most cases—subject to contracts with what was the Ontario Power Authority and now is the Independent Electricity System Operator: contracts not reviewed in public, not questioned at the Ontario Energy Board, not subjected to any legislative oversight, and outside the purview of public control.

This government has happily continued privatization throughout the last 12 years, without reference to this Legislature, without reference to the Ontario Energy Board, and is now engaged in another privatization—and it is the largest in Ontario's history—of a public utility without reference to the regulator, the Ontario Energy Board. That has consequences, Speaker, as you are well aware. Ontarians are now spending somewhere in the range of \$750 million to \$1 billion a year paying private operators, private generators, profit that did not come out of our pockets back in the 1990s. People feel it in their wallets. They feel it in their purses.

This privatization will be facilitated by this change in law. This will be facilitated. A bill that cuts back on public intervention in the planning process is completely consistent with a government that wants power planning to be a cozy arrangement between private power companies and the cabinet. So many opportunities for friendships and favours; so little public scrutiny.

Speaker, the sale of Hydro One is not a stand-alone project. It's not being done in a way that leaves Hydro One out there unable to fend for itself. No, what the government is doing is changing the regulatory framework around Hydro One to maximize the opportunity for profit. If you have powerful private owners—and frankly, this is one of the biggest electricity grids on the market in

North America—then they will do everything they can to make sure that their profits continue to grow.

0920

I know the government has said that the Ontario Energy Board—which this government continues to weaken—will protect the people of Ontario. But frankly, the way our system is set up, if this private company—the new, private Hydro One—wants to increase the profits for its owners, for its masters, it simply has to build more infrastructure on which it can claim a guaranteed rate of return. It doesn't have to have a 20% rate of return on its investment; it can just have more and more extra pieces of infrastructure built that it gets 9% on, and that will satisfy these owners. They will be very well off.

Just this week in committee, we went through Bill 112, a companion to Bill 135 and a companion to the privatization initiatives of this government. Setting priorities for power lines will no longer be discussed or debated in public. Speaker, investments in the billions of dollars will not have to be justified as being useful for the electricity system. The cabinet will be able to decide and simply direct the regulator: “You accept this as a priority. The power company needs that. This will be built. They will get their profit off the top. Go ahead. Just make sure that when it comes to petty cash, when it comes to individual construction contracts, you follow these guidelines.” But the larger picture, the one where the big dollars will flow to these new private owners, that will be protected by the cabinet.

I want you to imagine, Speaker, a number of wealthy investors. Let's put them in Arizona in a hot tub on a clear summer evening, drinking bourbon and saying, “You know what? We need more money from our Ontario operation. You know that line in the Niagara Peninsula, the line to nowhere that cost 100 million bucks? Well, if we put another line beside it, we can claim another big chunk of cash. I mean, no one's complained. The government's very happy with a line to nowhere that cost 100 million bucks—\$5 million a year in interest payments.” I'm sure there are happy bondholders out there who are very pleased that they're getting five million bucks a year for a line to nowhere.

These hot tub denizens, the people who, between themselves, in one tub, own 30% or 40% of Hydro One, don't even have to submit to the indignity of an OEB hearing. They don't have to go to the Ontario Energy Board and say, “Folks, this is a good line. Approve it so we can make more money.” No, they can go to the ever-attendant Premier and her staff. They can draw a line on a map, a declaration of priority follows, and, as they say, “Bob's your uncle”—another investment that guarantees a high rate of return.

I think people need to look at the experience of the Financial Accountability Officer, the officer who reports to us, the legislators, on exactly what is going on with the government's books on an ongoing basis. The Auditor General audits after the fact; the FAO looks in advance. That Financial Accountability Officer tried to get the background documents on the Hydro One sale, and he

couldn't get them. He could not get them. He wanted to find out the justification for this sale. He wanted to see what the numbers were, what the analysis was. What was the business case?

I will read from his report: “During the preparation of this report, meetings were held with the Ministries of Finance and Energy and Treasury Board Secretariat to obtain additional information on fair market value estimation methods for rate-regulated companies, accounting line items that would be impacted and related accounting treatments.” He wasn't looking for commercial secrets; he was looking for information that the government of Ontario used to make a decision, that the Liberals had in their cabinet.

Interestingly, “under the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the province is not permitted to disclose cabinet records to the FAO unless the cabinet gives permission”—which they didn't—or a record is more than 20 years old. The determination of what constitutes a cabinet record is made by the province. In some cases, in the course of this project, the FAO requested information that the province had deemed to be a cabinet record, and chose not to provide. Where relevant, these gaps in information have been identified in this report.”

Speaker, I want to let you know right now that there will be Tim Hortons receipts that will be declared cabinet documents. There will be hotel bills for a meeting with investors in Arizona that will come under a veil of secrecy. I think there will be notices that the Premier has to get up in the morning that will be declared state secrets, because, let's face it, this is a government that wants to put a veil, a cover over everything to do with electricity planning.

The Financial Accountability Officer had a few other comments. He estimated the market value of Hydro One to be \$11 billion to \$14 billion. Take that. “The initial 15% sale of Hydro One would significantly reduce the province's deficit in 2015–16.” That is a critical fact, because many people in this province—many of my constituents—come up to me and say, “Why on earth are the Liberals selling off Hydro One? It's a money-maker. Why are we putting it in a position where it can be owned by American, German, Japanese or Chinese interests? Why don't we have it owned here in Ontario by the people of Ontario?”

But, if we look back, the Harris government in the late 1990s had a problem: An election was coming up and it had a big deficit hole to fill. It looked around, went through the closets, took out the couches, took out the pillows and looked for change, but they couldn't find enough change under those couch cushions. They decided they needed a big chunk, and they needed it fast. So, they sold a 99-year lease of Highway 407. Everybody knows how that story worked out: drivers getting dinged and Mike Harris's Conservatives getting enough money to make the numbers look good.

Fast forward to 2015: an election coming up in 2018. This government has an opportunity, \$1.5-billion chunks

at a time, to make their deficit numbers look much better. There may be some secret reasons why Hydro One is being sold by the Liberals. I don't know what those are, but I do know one thing: If every year their deficit numbers look better, so that when we get to the next election they can say, "Deficit conquered," man, that is something that moves mountains and sells very large assets. Maybe next they'll broaden the ownership of hospitals and schools. Whatever else is not nailed down is going to be on the chopping block.

The Financial Accountability Officer wrote, "The partial sale of Hydro One could also have important direct implications for non-residential electricity customers. They pay a debt retirement charge ... which is levied on electricity consumption to help pay down the debt of the former Ontario Hydro, the predecessor to Hydro One." The debt retirement charge "is not only an additional charge for electricity consumers, but also a significant source of revenue for the province."

This is another instance where you've got a steel cover over the facts. I was in estimates committee a few weeks ago trying to get from the Minister of Energy, the Deputy Minister of Energy, what the debt retirement charge would be after all this money came in from the sale of Hydro One. That number is a moving target. There isn't anything publicly available. The Minister of Finance at some point will declare, "This is what remains to be paid in the residual stranded debt, and this is the debt retirement charge." I don't think any of this money is going to be used to reduce the debt retirement charge that non-residential consumers will be paying. Maybe the government will surprise us. I do know that, whatever calculation is made by the Minister of Finance, it will be completely opaque. We in this province won't be able to find out exactly how it's calculated and what its real function is.

Because of the lack of information, the Financial Accountability Officer had to say, "It is not possible for the FAO to offer a definitive opinion on whether the partial sale of Hydro One would help the province to achieve a balanced budget or surplus in 2017–18." They couldn't get the numbers—not available, covered, buried, done. When you're in a situation where even your Financial Accountability Officer can't get the information, then you've got a big problem. We have a big problem in this province, and that is one that needs to be addressed.

0930

About a year ago, I had an opportunity to speak before the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. I was speaking to them because they are—what can I say? Their business, and the employment they provide in Ontario, is exquisitely tuned to the price of electricity, so they follow it very closely. I spoke in the spring of 2014. This was several months after the long-term energy plan of 2013 had come out.

Speaker, I want to share with you some of my observations on that long-term energy plan because we never had the opportunity to scrutinize it either in this Legislature or before the Ontario Energy Board, to actually

take the numbers apart, to actually bring forward the decision-makers, have them testify under oath, have them cross-examined so we could determine whether or not this plan for power, which is critical to Ontario, was substantial or full of hot air.

What I had to say was that the first question that people were asking was about the credibility of the long-term energy plan, one that we never actually got a chance to examine in depth: Does that long-term energy plan of 2013 accurately represent where the Liberal government wants to go with electricity in Ontario over the next few years? In broad outline, it probably does set out where the Liberals want to go, but it doesn't present a pathway forward that the province can sustain, and it doesn't accurately present the scale of risk to electricity consumers.

There are a number of factors that are intertwined in electricity planning, which is one of the reasons you want to have a public hearing with the ability to summon witnesses and question them under oath. The projected increase in price for electricity in the plan—which personally I think is an understatement; I think the risk of much higher prices is there and not set out in the plan—has huge consequences for Ontario's economy, not only for manufacturers but also simply for the purchasing power of the population as a whole.

AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, had presented useful information about the competitiveness of Ontario rates for large power consumers on its website. As everyone in this chamber is aware, Ontario is not providing competitive rates. We didn't see any program in the long-term energy plan that the Liberals were proposing that would adequately address this issue. Frankly, without them putting large-scale burden on the backs of people who are paying taxes or putting more burden on residential and small commercial consumers, I didn't see a lot of options the Liberals were exploring to manage costs with their approach. I think we can characterize the Liberal approach to electricity and to electricity planning as an approach of ongoing privatization, system fragmentation and overbuilding of infrastructure. Energy efficiency, demand management and conservation investments are not being implemented on a sufficient scale to reduce demand for new transmission capacity or to defray investments in generation, so that their efforts are either ineffective or add to costs without displacing other expenses. This high-cost approach threatens Ontario's economy but also threatens the viability of the grid itself.

We lost the Xstrata smelter in Timmins a number of years ago because of high energy prices. It relocated to Quebec, where generation and transmission costs are lower for them. But in Ontario, the customers who remain behind have to pick up the costs for generation capacity and for transmission capacity, and that means higher costs for everyone who hasn't yet abandoned the grid.

Now, you should be aware, Speaker, that when we first looked at the long-term energy plan, we noticed that the cost of the system was going up 18% over the next

five years but the prices for commercial customers were going up around 30%. Now, prices were going up 40% for residential because the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit was being taken off. AMPCO's researchers showed that the difference between the increased costs to the system and the increased rate for electricity had to, in part, be attributed to drop in demand. As more customers abandon Ontario's electricity system, the people who remain have to pick up the slack, and that has a substantial material impact on the people of this province.

You're well aware that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and many people in rural Ontario have been desperately trying to get out from under the high and rising cost of electric baseboard heating. A number of decades ago, when Ontario had substantial surplus power, Ontario Hydro pushed hard for rural Ontario to go to electric baseboard heating. It cost a lot to set it up. They got rid of wood and they got rid of oil, propane, whatever, and they tied themselves into the electricity system. They have been hit hard. If you look at a political map of Ontario and its discontents, you will see that wherever there is electric baseboard heating, there's great anger against this Liberal government. I pick it up in my own riding. The few people in my riding who have electric baseboard heating are just furious and desperate about the cost—furious and desperate. So the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is trying to move forward with a project of providing natural gas heating to rural communities that are just outside the economic zone for provision of natural gas. They're getting some support from the provincial government. They want to abandon the grid in a major way because the costs that have been visited upon them are increasingly unbearable.

Let's face it, Speaker: As large numbers of electric baseboard heaters leave the system, the remaining transmission/generation costs will apply to those who haven't left. Those higher prices that this government has driven forward are having a big impact on the long-term viability of the grid because people are trying to abandon it whenever they have the opportunity. That, Speaker, is of consequence.

The other risk engendered by these high prices is now manifesting itself in Germany, Hawaii and California. The price of installed solar power is now reaching grid parity or dropping below grid prices. In the United States, it's projected that solar power will reach grid parity in 20 states in the next two years. That means that if they have solar panels on their roof, they can actually get power at the same prices they're paying to their hydro utility, or less. At that point, when we hit grid parity, it's expected we could see substantial defection by consumers. That has happened in Hawaii. It is a very big planning problem for that jurisdiction.

At the rate Ontario is going, we could hit grid parity with solar fairly soon. When I talk to the Canadian Solar Industries Association, they say that by about 2020 people will be able to start dramatically cutting their consumption of power from the grid because solar will be at the same price.

In Germany right now, solar photovoltaic power for newly installed systems costs between nine and a half and 12 euro cents. We're paying 17 cents for peak power in Ontario. Solar is cheaper there now than the power we buy for our homes. Ontario's prices are continuing to go up. People leaving the grid and leaving those remaining holding the bag is going to become a bigger and bigger issue. I don't believe the Liberals have adequately accounted for the potential to lose customers and demand, thus forcing much higher rate increases in the future.

Stranded debts have been a burden on our economy for quite a while now. There's no recognition in the Liberals' long-term energy plan, a plan that was never tested before a tribunal, a plan whose background data was never subjected to deep scrutiny, whose decision-makers were never questioned under oath—that plan has not taken adequate account of ongoing drops in demand for electricity and its consequences for our electricity system.

The second risk that this long-term energy plan we're now working with, that will become the norm in the future—the second risk they don't address is the reliability risk. Speaker, we are in a situation where, as our weather patterns change, as more extreme weather events become the norm, our system is not built for and not reinforced to deal with those problems. I asked the Minister of Energy in estimates what sort of provision they've made for extreme weather events. What I was told a few weeks ago was that last fall a working group was set up. No plan was produced; no numbers were given before the estimates committee.

0940

I note that last night in Vancouver there was a wind-storm with winds of 120 kilometres per hour. Power was knocked out in a big way. Are we ready for something like that in Ontario? Obviously not, because we've already had windstorms this fall that have knocked out power farther north in this province. In 2013, we had an ice storm that knocked out power in the GTA and regions east. Were we ready for that? No, we weren't.

This government has not planned adequately for changing weather. It has not planned adequately for decreasing demand. It has ignored the major factors that are going to change the environment the electricity system will operate in in the years to come.

This plan doesn't deal with overcapacity in production. As you're well aware, Speaker, Ontario, for years now, has been producing \$1.5 billion worth of power more than it needs. We sell it for about \$500 million; we take a \$1-billion loss. The government used to refer to that \$500 million as profit. They were challenged on it and had to withdraw; the minister had to make a withdrawal in the House. They aren't making profit; they're cutting their losses. Fair enough, but are they dealing with overproduction in the electricity system? Are they actually looking at what the system needs and what way it has to be configured in order to match demand with supply? No, they're not; that's not there.

Frankly, this plan—the one we're operating under now; the unscrutinized, unexamined, untested plan—does

not adequately assess the risk of the roughly \$25 billion in refurbishments that are planned for our nuclear plants in the next 15 years. Be well aware, Speaker, nuclear projects have not come in on time or on budget in Ontario's history. The experience has frequently been a doubling of price over estimates. In fact, it was the gross overruns on the new build of Darlington that caused dramatic price increases in the cost of power at the beginning of the 1990s, in a period when demand was dropping.

The government has been using estimates of 8.6 cents per kilowatt hour for power coming from a refurbished Darlington nuclear generating station. Speaker, this is very, very different from the conclusions reached by Hydro-Québec when they did their study for refurbishment of the Gentilly-2 nuclear plant. They wrote a very extensive report of their experience because they sent their people to Point Lepreau in New Brunswick to watch nuclear refurbishment that went totally out of control. They sent their engineers to Wolseong in Korea to look at the Candu refurbishment there. It's a much better managed project, but still, even using the best practices employed with the Candu plant in Wolseong in South Korea, Hydro-Québec's best-case projection for power cost was 12.3 cents per kilowatt hour. It's substantially higher than what Ontario is estimating.

Speaker, we think the Liberals were far too optimistic in their projection of a 40% increase in the cost of power over five years. What the exact number is, I don't know, but I know they were lowballing.

The Liberal approach to planning has largely ignored the legal requirement for hearings so that all of their evidence, all their projections, can be challenged in public. This has led to high and rising prices as well as some very visible damages. Speaker, people are well aware of what happened with the smart meters. People may know that around 2004, according to the Auditor General, the Ontario government announced a plan to reduce energy consumption in the province by putting in smart meters. Frankly, that project went ahead and the Ontario Energy Board was never asked to actually hold a hearing on smart meters. The Ontario Energy Board was never asked to test the assumptions that this investment would be based on. That proved to be very expensive for the people of Ontario.

As the Auditor General found, the cost of the smart meter project was somewhere in the range of \$2 billion—almost double what had initially been projected. And, frankly, what the Auditor General found was that the savings that had been projected were far less than the government had said they would be, in part because they didn't look at things like the cost of scrapping millions of meters that still had a decade or so to run on their lives. They didn't look at the costs that came with smart meters. They didn't look at all of the factors that have given us a \$2-billion investment with virtually no payback.

People wonder why their electricity bills are higher. I don't think there should be any question. There have been disastrous decisions by this government that didn't

allow those decisions to actually go through public hearings where they could be scrutinized. That's of consequence.

We went through a process in this Legislature with regard to the building, abandonment and relocation of two gas plants, one in Mississauga and one in Oakville. Speaker, you may be aware of this—I'm not sure everyone who is watching will be aware of this—but those plants were given the go-ahead, the green light for construction, even as power demand was dropping sharply. We were dumping export power on markets in New York and Michigan and Quebec, sometimes at what the government cutely refers to as "negative pricing"—we paid people to take the power. Yet the government proceeded with those plants until an election came along and forced the government to spend very large amounts of money to ensure the safety of a number of seats.

That's the history of power planning in this province by this government when it doesn't actually allow for the kind of hearings and examination of evidence that's needed to make rational decisions.

This government had an opportunity in the last decade to move away from coal by putting in place a very aggressive energy conservation and energy efficiency program. That would have cut the energy bills for homes, for families and for businesses. Instead of doing that—and they were urged to do that by Howard Hampton, the energy critic for the NDP and the leader of the NDP earlier in the last decade—they didn't go that route. They built a whole series of gas plants, the cost of which was dramatically higher than the cost of power from coal.

Coal had to be phased out; there was no question. The question was, do you do it in a way that actually protects consumers from high prices, or do you do it in a way that maximizes price for consumers? This Liberal government decided to make the decision for a maximum increase in prices.

What they didn't look at, as well, was the fact that in the next decade, as they proceed with nuclear refurbishments, those plants will be ramped up dramatically in production to account for a loss of nuclear production. So all the goals that we've invested in to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions will be carried away on a wave of gas-fired greenhouse gas emissions, carbon dioxide, in the next decade.

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This government has given lip service to conservation, but in fact it has put in place the electricity infrastructure that even now is producing more power than Ontario can consume. I think there's a reasonable expectation that, in the decades to come, this government will be struggling—sorry, it may not be this government, it may be another government—this province will be struggling with the burden of those decisions.

The most important part of this bill—now that you know the context, now that you know how far wrong things can go when you have, effectively, unaccountable and secret processes for determining electricity policy in Ontario—has to do with electricity planning. We have a

situation where the government said, “Sure, we have a statutory framework for power planning in Ontario. We’ve ignored it for most of the time we’ve been in power. I think it’s time to take this ad hoc process and make it law.” That is the heart of this bill, Speaker. That is the heart of this bill. That decision, and that decision alone, is enough for anyone to vote against this bill. That decision alone is going to make it very difficult for us in Ontario to have any control of our electricity system.

Now, it isn’t as though there hasn’t been a statutory system in place. When I look at the minister’s remarks from the other day, he talks about putting in place a statutory system for electricity planning, but, in fact, we have the Electricity Act, 1998, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, which set up the basis for electricity planning. Those acts were supposed to require those two agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board—sorry, the Independent Electricity System Operator to prepare an integrated power system plan and then the Ontario Energy Board to review it.

Frankly, the public hearings before the Ontario Energy Board will be dropped with this new system. The minister had this to say: “The proposed legislation would ensure a consistent, long-term planning process is followed.” Maybe it would, maybe it wouldn’t. But, if recent history is any guide, any inconvenience that’s posed by this long-term energy planning process would cause it to be set aside.

As you’re well aware and as I’ve said, there is a statutory system and it has been ignored. I asked legislative research for a little background. They said that the process in place now to produce an independent power supply plan was introduced as part of a restructuring of the power system by the government itself in 2004. It was facing a gap between supply and demand. Remember, there was a power crunch around 2003-04. The government’s plan at the time was that, with this independent planning system, we could avoid the kind of power shortages we saw between 2003 and 2004. The government focused on that and phasing out coal.

Only one IPSP, one power plan, has ever been fully drafted by the Ontario Power Authority, but the entire process wasn’t completed. In 2006, the Minister of Energy directed the agency to complete a 20-year plan covering generation, distribution, conservation and green energy. This was submitted to the Ontario Energy Board in 2007, but its review was suspended in 2008 after the minister requested revisions. So they had a law in place, the agency was directed to put a plan forward, and when it got into hearings, it got into trouble. It got into trouble, Speaker.

A second integrated power supply plan process was begun in 2011 when the Ontario Power Authority was directed to update and complete a power supply plan for submission to the Ontario Energy Board. That would be based on the 2010 long-term energy plan. As of 2011, that plan went no further.

In his remarks in this Legislature, the minister said, “As well,” this new plan “would enshrine in legislation

Ontario’s Open Government Initiative”—Open Government Initiative? That’s amazing; they have a sense of dry wit, of irony, of humour, that sometimes is missed by those of us in this chamber—“by making consultation with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal groups throughout Ontario a requirement in the development of our future long-term energy plans—it will be put in the legislation.”

The last process for having public hearings on power planning was put in legislation as well, and totally ignored. Based on their track record, why would you think they would do any better? They don’t have any difficulty ignoring the law when it doesn’t suit them. As we are well aware—and we went through this in the gas plant hearings—Liberal political staff were involved in large-scale deletion of their correspondence, their email, that was supposed to have been sorted and passed on to archives. It didn’t happen. The law was ignored. Was there any penalty? None that I’m aware of.

There was no penalty for ignoring Ontario’s statutory power planning system, either. The government ignored it, carried on with its own ad hoc routine and is now putting that ad hoc routine into law, saying that they’re actually going to have consultation. Well, the last time, they said they were actually going to have hearings. Maybe they will have some meetings, but will it actually allow people to know what the truth is behind the numbers? Don’t put a single dollar on that, Speaker, not a single dollar.

Let’s look back at some history. In the past, the Environmental Assessment Act would have allowed people to ask for projects to be brought forward for environmental assessment. But in June 2006, the government, through a regulation—one that wasn’t publicly posted in advance—simply amended the IESO act so that there was no environmental assessment any further on major projects.

The environmental assessment process is supposed to capture very large projects. It is supposed to be able to subject those to hearings. This government was not interested in any part of this supply plan or any part of this transmission plan being subjected to an environmental assessment.

Frankly, at the time, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario was very upset with what had happened. As this says, “Last week the government made an important announcement about how the province would meet its future electricity needs—and then quickly followed up with two more decisions, said Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, that deprived the public of their rights to participate in decisions that could have great environmental significance for the people of Ontario.”

Speaker, we had a process with a number of problems that allowed for open hearings. The government didn’t like that. It curtailed people’s ability to use the Environmental Assessment Act to get at those projects, those propositions, and then even that wasn’t enough. They abandoned the statutory planning process, set up their own ad hoc process, now putting that in law, and they’re

going to further constrain the ability to use environmental assessment to deal with new electricity projects.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sounds like Harper.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sounds like some Prime Minister we don't like.

“The Environmental Bill of Rights”—this is what the Environmental Commissioner wrote—“requires ministries to post on the Environmental Registry any proposed new regulation that will have a significant effect on the environment before the regulation is passed.” I think that's really quite reasonable. Before the regulation is passed, the public should have an opportunity to comment. That's why we have an Environmental Bill of Rights. “Instead, late last week”—referring to June 2006—the Ministry of the Environment posted an ‘information notice’ on the registry advising that the government had already passed a regulation exempting the plans for nuclear power from an environmental assessment. The ministry claimed that in this case full notice on the registry was not required because the regulation to exempt decisions about nuclear power is purely ‘administrative in nature.’”

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The Environmental Commissioner was taken aback. He said: “This is the first regulation under the Environmental Assessment Act that has not been posted on the Environmental Registry for public review and comment in the 12-year history of the Environmental Bill of Rights. This decision goes against the whole principle of government accountability and transparency enshrined in the act. Exempting the province’s long-term electricity plans from the environmental assessment process—to consider the possible impacts of those plans—is clearly environmentally significant and should have been posted on the registry for public comment.”

“In effect,” Miller added, “in making these environmental decisions, the government is escaping its responsibility to be transparent and accountable under Ontario’s two key public-participation statutes.”

This bill is all of a piece; it is one whole. It is a process, on one hand, of trying to make privatization of the system easier, trying to make sure that investors will maximize their return at the expense of ratepayers, at the expense of the people and the economy of Ontario. The other piece, Speaker, is one in which this government cuts out public participation, cuts out public scrutiny, provides a gloss, a superficial series of activities that don’t allow, in fact, for deep scrutiny and deep examination. These two things go together. The more you want a system that is not controlled by the public, the less those new investors will want to have to be subjected to public scrutiny.

I said earlier that this whole process opens up an opportunity for far more decisions to be made behind closed doors, far more favours to be given, far more friends to be pleased, but certainly nothing that will actually help the people of Ontario deal with the issues that they have to come to grips with. This government narrowed the scope of public participation, cut back on

the ability of the public to intervene, and they’re now heralding this bill as one that provides for public consultation.

We went through the gas plant scandal. We went through that even though, publicly, this party and citizens were saying that this plant in Mississauga and this plant in Oakville were not needed for the power system. We went through the smart meters because this government didn’t actually use the Ontario Energy Board to hold public hearings. They simply told the Ontario Energy Board, “You will actually be implementing part of this process. Go ahead and implement. Don’t, in fact, regulate; don’t, in fact, examine; don’t, in fact, question,” because this Liberal government doesn’t like to be questioned. “We don’t like to have to present a business case for doing something.” In fact, they dislike it so much they’re changing the law so they won’t have to do it at all.

Speaker, I urge you and I urge members of this chamber, legislators in this province, to vote against this bill. If another bill comes forward that has a reasonable approach to dealing with power planning, that allows for public inquiry, public examination, public questioning of decision-makers under oath, then let’s look at that. This bill is not that process. This bill is a closing of doors. This bill is providing advantage to those who are powerful enough to call cabinet ministers and Premiers on their cellphones and tell them what they want done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker!

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well done. The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Much appreciated, Speaker. I wasn’t anticipating that the member would have finished his comments a few minutes early, but I do very much appreciate it because it allows us time to have a full range of speakers and comments on his remarks.

I have a lot of respect for the member from Toronto–Danforth. He represents me. I’m a resident of his area. I know him to be very thoughtful and researched in his criticisms, but his analysis of what we’re doing in energy—I sit with him on a number of committees, and I appreciate his comments. However, you’ve got to appreciate, Speaker, that when—this is detailed analysis that he gives. He loses so much credibility when he starts spreading information that we’re going to privatize schools and hospitals. I’m seeing this campaign in my community where people are reacting with horror: “You’re privatizing schools next?” It just doesn’t serve him well. If he wants us to take his remarks seriously, he wouldn’t be spreading that kind of information in the community.

The same goes for what we’re seeing in the remarks from the opposition on Hydro One. There’s a whole series of skewed information which concerns me, because the notion that rates are automatically going to go up with this privatization is just patently false. The reality

is that the rates are going to be approved by the OEB, and we think there will be downward pressure on rates because of a more efficient operation.

But you also see it in this argument he makes that the OEB is going to be approving unnecessary transmission lines in order to pad profits. It's just absolutely fatuous to consider for a moment that the Premier's office will be giving a direction to build a transmission line to nowhere and that they are then going to go to the OEB to get approval on a rate increase. It's just not going to happen.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Your facts are skewed. You're skewed. Your government is skewed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe will slow down a bit. Thank you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I seem to have ignited a fire in the opposition as they're looking in the mirror and they see that they are doing things that they really shouldn't be doing. Do please tell the total story to the people of Ontario. They deserve nothing less from you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I guess I disagree with the member opposite because I know that many of the things that the member from the third party is saying are right. I know a farmer out our way who's getting off the grid because it's too expensive. It's cheaper for him, through diesel generation, to produce three-phase power. And that gets scary.

It is almost laughable. He talks about people being worried about privatizing schools and the like, because we don't know what this government is going to do next. They talk about the transmission line to nowhere: These guys have built it. They've got a transmission line they built to nowhere. So we don't know what they're going to build next. It's interesting that he would bring that up because that's what we're seeing in this province. We're seeing projects being made that are just crazy.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I'll tell you, I get it. And if I remember correctly, we're supposed to direct it this way, not across the floor, Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I didn't say one word today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, you said some words.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I didn't say one word today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Don't challenge the Chair, Minister.

Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. It's interesting; generally the member from London—Fanshawe is very reasonable in this House, but I can see some of the comments getting them upset. And no wonder. Transmission lines to nowhere: This is a gross waste of public money that is now making us uncompetitive. Our businesses are leaving and, unfortunately, the old "last person out, turn off the lights"—that's what we're seeing in this province. Business is leaving. It's time for this government to wake up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to commend the member from Toronto—Danforth, who put very detailed, thoughtful points forward this morning during his address on this particular bill. He highlighted various issues.

I just want to go on the record by saying that attacking one's credibility doesn't promote your own. It really belittles yourself as a person with honour in this House, and I think what the member was bringing forward was his points of view—our points of view. Attacking that credibility doesn't really elevate yourself, so I would ask the member to think about what you're doing before you open up your mouth.

The concerns that he brought forward were very sincere. If you look at the practice of this government that has been going on for many years, it's the veil that has been put forward—the information that has been kept from the public; the ongoing privatization; the wrongful decisions that have been put into place, particularly when it comes to hydro; the secrecy behind the whole gas plant issue; the smart meters. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, so why wouldn't we stand here and criticize this government for the actions that they're taking? That's our role. We're doing our job. Surprise! That's what we're supposed to do. We're highlighting the issues we're hearing within our constituencies.

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Now, with this particular bill that's going forward, you are going to put a further barrier and a veil where people won't have the opportunity to question this process. You will continue pushing your agenda forward, keeping that information or keeping the opportunity from individuals to challenge that information, and you're surprised we're criticizing this? Wake up. You must be hearing the same thing in your area. This is what's happening. We're doing our job, holding you to account. You have to listen to some of this information and realize that you're heading down the wrong path.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to be joining this lively debate this morning on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

All Ontarians know that long-term energy planning is critical for our province. With this bill, the goal is to deliver a very consistent, transparent, long-term planning process. We want to ensure that there is consultation with everyone involved, the public stakeholders and aboriginal group, and you are going to see two new initiatives to help families and businesses conserve energy and water. The key here is conservation.

When I worked as a broadcast journalist for CTV News in Kitchener, I got a call one day from an engineer who wanted me to come visit him. His name is Paul Rak. He was very excited about how he was saving energy at his four-bedroom house in Kitchener. I went to visit him, and I took a camera with me. This was in the dead of January. He showed me his hydro bill, which was \$34. I

was stunned, and I asked him, "How did you do this? He said, "A bunch of little things and a few big things." He and his family have won a number of environmental awards for their efforts, and he asked me, "Daiene, why aren't all people doing what I'm doing? It saves money; it saves energy."

Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to some comments that were made by the member for Toronto—Danforth. I was there in the briefing with the Financial Accountability Officer. We heard his comments. But when we asked him why he did not include the net benefit of investing capital that is raised by the IPO of Hydro One in further offerings, he had no answer. What about the thousands of jobs that are going to be created with infrastructure that will come with this? I would have to say that it was somewhat disappointing.

But I believe in Bill 35. It's forward-thinking, and we need to pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Toronto—Danforth: two minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Beaches—East York, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Algoma—Manitoulin and Kitchener Centre for their remarks.

I want to address first the comments from the member from Beaches—East York. I raised this question of sale of hospitals and schools because, frankly, when our party questions the Premier as to what else is for sale, we don't get a straight answer. We don't get an answer saying, "Nothing else is for sale." No, Speaker, this is a government that has increasingly privatized Ontario lottery and gaming, is privatizing generation and is privatizing Hydro One. Frankly, Speaker, there is no line that this government appears unwilling to cross when it comes to privatizing. They're absolutely happy privatizing the financing of hospitals, privatizing the financing of roads and privatizing the maintenance on the Eglinton Crosstown.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think the question is, when will this government definitively say they're going to stop—

Hon. Bill Mauro: You supported it between 1990 and 1995.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I guess the minister didn't hear me the first time. I hope he did this time.

Continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First point. Second point: the assurance from the member that the rates won't go up with the new Hydro One because the OEB is there to protect us. Well, in fact, my friends, the OEB is going to be stripped of its power to determine whether or not new transmission lines are worthy or unworthy, which allows for tremendous opportunities for private investors to go and speak to cabinet and say, "You know what, folks? I need this line. Declare it a priority or you're going to have political problems."

This government is setting things up—

Hon. Bill Mauro: Oh, I see. You—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The Minister of Natural Resources is warned.

Continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm glad I have attention from the Liberals on this, Speaker. I think they recognize they're vulnerable on this. As I go door to door in my riding petitioning on this issue, many people who were big enthusiasts in the past are very angry now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank goodness it's 10:15.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome my old boss and good friend Doug Saunders and Mya from Oakville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of my page Dayo Kehinde, to introduce her father, Michael Kehinde, who will be in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I see my guests from Wasaga Beach are just coming into the gallery: Tim and Mary North.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: ISARC is in the House. They're going to be here all day, so please, everyone, drop in and say hello.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm delighted to welcome back to the House Dr. John Milloy, who has joined us in the gallery. He is here with his class from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Wilfrid Laurier University: Dr. Joy Philip, Cassandra Wolfe, Rodny Said, Presley Roberts, Ben Redfern, Carmen Mortley, Jonathan Fulford, Lindsey Werner, and Filip Gabrić. They're here on a field trip.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Coca-Cola recently celebrated 1,000 days without time lost due to injury. Visiting us today from the Chatham facility is the manager, Tony Caradonna. Also from Coca-Cola Canada are Peter Pyrchalla and John O'Leary. Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce one of my constituency assistants from Hamilton, Ryan Ladner.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome two constituents of mine in the members' east gallery this morning: Barbara Duncan and Jacqui Pylypiw. They're joining me for lunch today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I do have some introductions. First, although he has already been introduced—and, rather interestingly, we were heckling a guest, so I don't know where that comes from; that's quite all right, we do recall that—the former member from Kitchener Centre in the 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. John Milloy.

Also in the Speaker's gallery: the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parlia-

ments and the Speaker of the 39th Parliament, Steve Peters.

And also in the Speaker's gallery, some dear friends of mine—we grew up in Eagle Place together: Brian Tremblay and Judith Goodwin. Welcome. We're glad you're with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Enhancing access to autism treatment is something very dear to me. For the last five years, I've been involved with the Simcoe county association for autism with Erin Nightingale to fundraise. I promised the families that I would ask you this question, Madam Premier: On April 2, the member for Ottawa–Orléans stood up in this House during question period and said she was very encouraged by the strong action the government took to improve the lives of children with autism. Yet, just months later, we became aware that there were 16,000 children sitting on wait-lists for autism treatment.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, is she proud and encouraged by the strong action this government has taken while thousands of children languish on wait-lists?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very proud of the work that we have done over the years to improve the service to children with autism. The Leader of the Opposition will know that I was the Minister of Education. At the time, I worked very closely with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who is now the Deputy Premier, and we worked with autism associations around the province. We worked with them, Mr. Speaker. We established a coordinated, multi-interdisciplinary care circle for families and for children with autism. We put more money into IBI treatment and ABA treatment, which allowed thousands of education workers in schools to be trained. So, yes, I'm very proud of that work. Is there more to be done? Absolutely.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I can applaud the government for additional investments. However, it is clear that that funding is not enough. Some 16,000 children are on wait-lists. Furthermore, the government has had the audacity to claim they have expanded applied-behaviour-analysis-based services and supports when in fact we now know that 1,000 fewer kids received ABA funding over the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, how did this government stand up on World Autism Awareness Day and claim they expanded autism treatment programs with a straight face, knowing that you have not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sorry; that is just not the case. There was no funding for ABA. We put funding in place for ABA and we trained people around the province in schools. So here's the issue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

The Speaker will also acknowledge that there are people speaking when I'm standing. I don't want a repeat of yesterday, but I will if I have to.

Please finish, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a very complex issue. It is not enough just to look at a wait-list, Mr. Speaker. What we have to do is to make sure that children are getting IBI when it will benefit them the most. We have to make sure that schools have the ability to take kids into their system. That's why we train so many education workers in ABA. That's why we continue to work to make sure that children get the service that they need. There's more to be done. We acknowledge that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Premier, it's not complex. It's very clear. It's straightforward: 1,000 fewer kids received ABA funding. It's simple. The government is known for having conversations, panels, sit-downs, committees, chit-chats. But what they're not known for is taking action. The Autism Parent Resource Kit is a nice tool for parents, but what I'm looking for in the kit I can't find, and what it's missing, Mr. Speaker, is funding: funding for 16,000 children on wait-lists who struggle every day.

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to going to the Toronto Autism Gala. Can I tell the parents and children at that event that this government will commit to making sure that these 16,000 children on the wait-lists—that you'll deal with it; you won't delay; you will figure it out; you will have an answer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the Leader of the Opposition doesn't think this is a complex file, then that just demonstrates his complete lack of understanding of what autism is, Mr. Speaker, and how our society can deal with it.

I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition—
Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Too complex? Resign. Can't fix it? Resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. One more round like this and I'll go to warnings.

Finish, please. You have the wrap-up.

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it has been a top priority of this government to provide services for children when they need them, to make sure that the IBI services and the ABA services are available to students, are available to children. We understand that families struggle with children with autism. We will continue to work to make investments that will improve the lives of children and families who are dealing with autism. We are not going to oversimplify it the way the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Time and time again, this government has repeated that the sell-off of Hydro One won't impact hydro rates. When the Minister of Energy spoke to the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, he said that the government "will ensure taxpayers and ratepayers are protected" and that "a private Hydro One will never have the power to set its own rates." Yet right after 15% of Hydro One is put on the market, what do we find in our mailboxes? A notice that Hydro One is attempting to increase distribution charges effective January 1. It seems oddly coincidental that the first chance a partially private Hydro One has to increase rates, it's going to increase your hydro bill. Speaker, does the government plan to do what's right and protect the ratepayers of Ontario from the fire sale of Hydro One, which will only result in increased hydro rates for consumers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Hydro One is asking the Ontario Energy Board. It's the Ontario Energy Board that makes the decision. He's defeating his own point by saying that we're going to increase rates. What they basically sent a notice on is that they're making an application to do so. There will be a process. There will be public hearings. There will be intervenors. There will be consumers' associations all going before the Ontario Energy Board. The member knows that, time and time again, the Ontario Energy Board has varied or reduced those increases. He's just proving the point: Hydro One can't do it themselves. They've got to go to OEB and they have to have public hearings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister is right: They do have to go to the OEB, and they have rarely turned down a rate increase at the OEB. This came out at the very first opportunity.

Back to the Minister of Energy: He stated on September 30th: "The Supreme Court upheld the right of the Ontario Energy Board to ensure consumers pay just and reasonable rates for electricity." When I get phone call after phone call at my constituency office telling me that my folks have to choose between heating and eating, or a woman who just had a baby goes home to a dark home because hydro has been cut off because she can't afford to pay it, that is anything but just and reasonable electricity rates.

Just two weeks after the beginning of the sale of Hydro One, the rates are going to be pushed up again, with hydro customers being hit hard. Will the government stop the sale of Hydro One? Will they do the right thing and allow them to keep their lights on?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing.
Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Hydro One has asked the Ontario Energy Board for a rate increase. In 2010, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for distribution and received a 9% reduction for its capital request. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for transmission and received a 3% reduction for its capital request. When Ontario Power Generation applied for a 6.2% rate increase in 2011—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order; and the member from Simcoe-Grey, come to order.

CARRY ON, PLEASE.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When Ontario Power Generation applied for a 6.2% rate increase in 2011, the OEB denied the request and lowered the rate by 0.8%. In 2014, OPG asked for a rate increase and the OEB only approved about half the request. So the Ontario Energy Board makes the decision, not Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Hydro rates in Ontario have gone up 77% over the last five years, and that's a fact that you can take to the bank, Minister.

In an interview with the Globe and Mail this weekend, Michael Penner, chair of the board for Hydro-Québec, was asked about the possibility of the privatization of that province's utility, to which he answered, "Don't even think about Hydro-Québec and privatization in the same sentence." He also went on to say, "There's a better chance that the Egyptians would privatize the pyramids than we would privatize" in Quebec.

The chair of Hydro-Québec recognizes the absurdity of privatizing their electricity utility and the long-term value that such an asset brings to its province. Why is this government pressing on with the privatization of Hydro One, which will cause long-term pain to Ontario and its ratepayers? Stop the sale of Hydro One now.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I've asked the Leader of the Opposition, and I'll ask him again in answer to this question, why did he support the privatization of Ontario Hydro and OPG during his campaign for leadership? Why was that part of the platform of the Conservative Party in the election in 2014? They recommended selling shares to the public. They indicated in their own policy paper they would rely on the Ontario Energy Board to control rates. It's their policy.

Will the leader disavow himself from his own policy?

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When the Premier doesn't answer a simple question, Ontarians should ask themselves why. Is the Premier planning to sell off more revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question over and over again. The leader of the third party has seen our plan. She knows what's in

our plan. We ran on our plan. We are broadening the ownership of Hydro One in order to invest in infrastructure. That is the decision that we made, that is what we ran on, and we are going to make those investments because we know, in order to be competitive in the 21st century, that we need to make those investments in infrastructure. That's what we're going to do.

To do that, we are selling real estate. We sold the GM shares and we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One. That is our plan, that's what we ran on, and that's what we're implementing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier was done with her sell-offs of revenue-generating assets, she would have had a great answer. She could have said, "I appreciate the question from the leader of the NDP, but our revenue-generating public assets are safe. They're staying in public hands and they're not being sold." But very obviously she is not saying that, and that speaks volumes to the people of this province.

Is this Premier refusing to rule out selling more revenue-generating assets because she's planning to do exactly that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We made the decision that investing in infrastructure, roads, bridges, transit and water systems around this province was critical to the economy of the province. That's why we made the difficult decision to broaden the ownership of Hydro One: because we know that using an asset that is owned by the people of Ontario and leveraging that to be able to invest in new infrastructure that will be owned by the people of Ontario is critical if we're going to be competitive into the 21st century.

That's what we're doing. I know the leader of the third party doesn't think that's a good idea, but clearly she doesn't think that making the investments in infrastructure is a good idea. She's wrong. We need those investments. She has put forward no plan for how she would do that. We've got a plan and we're implementing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, our revenue-generating assets—the people of Ontario's revenue-generating assets—pay for things like transit. They pay for hospitals and schools, roads and bridges, nurses and education workers, police, scientists and snowplough drivers.

The independent Financial Accountability Officer of this province has shown that the selling off of these kinds of assets means less money to invest in the services that the families of this province rely upon. Will this Premier do the right thing by the province of Ontario, the right thing by the people of Ontario, and commit to not selling off any more of Ontario's revenue-generating assets?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is our responsibility as the government in this province to work to make the

economy as strong as it can be. If we do not do that, then we will not be able to generate the wealth and to generate the growth that will allow us to support the very institutions that the leader of the third party is talking about.

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It is our responsibility to make those investments, whether it's in people's talent and skills, in their education and skills training, whether it's in infrastructure or whether it's working with businesses to support them and create a dynamic business environment. That is our responsibility.

We made a determination that investment in infrastructure was a critical part of that plan. That's why we are making these investments. That's why we are broadening the ownership of Hydro One. The leader of the third party knows full well what is in our plan. We are implementing that plan.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You don't burn the furniture to heat the house.

My question is for the Premier. Every time we learn something new about the Hydro One sale, it gets worse. Yesterday the Minister of Finance confirmed that Ontario families are actually subsidizing the IPO. In fact, the province wrote a \$3-million check to Hydro One to pay for IPO costs, and there will be more coming.

Can the Premier explain why Ontario families, who are so opposed to the sell-off of Hydro One, are now subsidizing its sell-off?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, that's not the case. The Minister of Finance, I know, will want to comment in the supplementary, but let me just say this: We are building Ontario. The fact is that infrastructure that has been in place for decades needs to be renewed.

My term as the Minister of Transportation made it clear to me that we must make investments that, quite frankly, have been neglected by previous governments. We need to make those investments in order to be able to compete. In fact, we're patching up. We're actually behind in terms of the investments that needed to be made over the last 40 years, so we are making those investments, and we are building the province up.

So when the leader of the third party characterizes what we're doing as somehow taking away, what we are doing is we're building new. We're building new infrastructure that's needed for the next generation and the generation after that. That's what our plan is, and that's what we're implementing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Too bad nobody agrees with the Premier, except her and her small group of friends.

Not only are Ontario families subsidizing this Premier's sell-off, but it turns out the Premier is counting money that isn't even there. The Premier put out a press release last week claiming that the Hydro One sale generated \$2.2 billion that simply isn't there. It's not cash

that can be used for infrastructure and transit. It is simply an account entry. This deal is so bad that the Premier has to count money that doesn't even exist.

She started out by borrowing Mike Harris's hydro privatization plan, and now she's borrowing Tim Hudak's bad math plan. Exactly how much of this sell-off is based on this kind of bad math?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we have to talk about what these investments mean to the people of Ontario, because there are real projects that are creating real assets.

Yesterday we announced our government's investment of \$2.27 billion for the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. I had the opportunity to visit the hospital to see this fantastic new facility that has been built. That kind of investment will benefit people every single day. It will change people's lives. It will save people's lives. That kind of investment is exactly what we're talking about.

I also had the opportunity to visit our first fully digital hospital, the Humber River Hospital, last month. That, again, is the kind of investment that will change people's lives. Those are investments and projects that are happening all over the province. They will improve people's quality of life and that's what this investment means to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only will the sell-off of Hydro One cost us money in the long run, but to add insult to injury, Ontario families have just paid \$3 million, with more still to come, to actually have the privilege of mortgaging their own future. And the money that the Premier claims that she's counting on from this sell-off? Well, it's not cash; it's a number that the Premier has pulled out of thin air.

Just how bad does this deal have to get before the Premier admits that she is wrong? Or is that something this Premier does not know how to do: admit that she is wrong? That's what I suspect, Speaker. When is she going to admit that she's wrong and actually stop the selling off of any more of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Today, the NDP are going to make a motion, and this is what they're going to say: The new tranche that's being sold will raise as little as \$1.4 billion over the course of the next four years. That's what they're claiming. The fact of the matter is, this one transaction alone has netted to the families of Ontario \$3 billion: \$1 billion extra which is going to pay down debt. So we're paying down debt by \$1 billion. We're putting \$3 billion more into infrastructure.

They further say that we are now going to have forgone revenue. Absolutely. We are going to replace it with greater revenue, and that's the whole point of reinvestment, something that that party doesn't seem to understand.

We'll continue to do what's right for the people of Ontario. We're protecting consumers and ratepayers at

the same time. This is all net monies. The people of Ontario are now ahead as a result of the transaction we've just done.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. In the 2015 budget you announced that there would be a \$50-million reduction in funding to Ontario's medical laboratory companies. We have learned that Alpha Laboratories, whose CEO is former Liberal cabinet minister and leadership candidate Gerard Kennedy, has actually been exempted from this cut and will continue to receive the previous funding.

Mr. Speaker, my question is short and direct: Can the Premier confirm that Alpha Laboratories has in fact been exempted from this \$50-million cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. We have a proud tradition in this province of working closely with our community laboratories, including smaller laboratories like Alpha Laboratories but also LifeLabs and Dynacare—an extraordinary ability to provide the services at the quality that Ontarians expect. However, we've been working closely with those labs to see how we can find further efficiencies.

We've actually asked for a panel to be set up, which they have and they've just recently concluded their report, to look at how in the short, medium and long term we can provide those efficiencies, we can ensure that the quality is the highest and we can support our community laboratories to do even better work than they do. I'm currently reviewing that report. I've met with all stakeholders quite frequently over the course of the past year and will continue to do so as we develop a program that Ontarians can be proud of.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Premier, you've rewarded the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health for supporting you at your leadership convention by giving them plum cabinet positions. Mr. Kennedy also supported you at the convention, although you couldn't give him a cabinet post because he no longer sits as a member in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask once again to this Premier: Will she confirm that the preferential treatment given to Gerard Kennedy's Alpha Labs is in fact his reward for supporting her at the Liberal leadership convention?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Very borderline and I'm going to let it pass, but I would warn all members that you're not making those kinds of accusations directly or indirectly to any member in the House.

While I have the clock stopped, I'm going to remind all members that you address each other by either your

title or your riding. By doing so, it helps the tone of the place.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we have a laboratory services expert panel that was created in coordination and concert with our community labs and experts in the field and outside of the field that can provide us with the information and the recommendations that we need to strengthen our community labs that provide such a vital service to Ontarians.

There are no special exceptions to how we view any of the laboratories. We are looking at this purely from one vantage point: working and acting in the best interests of Ontarians; how we can find efficiencies so we can provide even more service to Ontarians; how we can ensure that laboratories exist throughout the province providing that high quality of service. We will approach this in a way which is based on the good advice of the expert panel.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Today your operative in the Sudbury by-election scandal, Mr. Lougheed, is going to court. Can you please confirm in this House today if your government is paying his legal bill, or is it the Liberal Party of Ontario?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I actually don't know the answer to that question and I will have to get back to the member opposite. I really have no idea.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow, who's in charge over there? It begs the question.

My follow-up question then would be this: You've had to sit down with lawyers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —in regards to the Sudbury by-election scandal. You've had to interview with the Ontario Provincial Police. You've obviously had legal counsel. Can you confirm in this House today if it's the people of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —the Liberal Party or yourself that paid your legal bills when it came to your protection in this particular scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The people of Ontario did not pay any legal bills for me, Mr. Speaker.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. This government and the people of this province value the idea that every member of society can and should be sup-

ported, especially at times when they are most in need. Much of that population is served by the programs that your ministry operates. However, even with this support, in my riding of Durham I hear from constituents, advocates and leaders in the community about the challenges that individuals living with and without disabilities experience during difficult times.

Minister, what improvements have been made to social assistance in Ontario to help the most vulnerable who are relying on these supports?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much to the member from Durham for the question. Our government knows how important social assistance is to supporting those in need. That is why over the past three years we have focused our increased investment in social assistance towards lifting the lowest rates and increasing support for individuals with disabilities. Our 2015 budget invested an additional \$100 million annually to continue these rate increases. I'm pleased to report that as of November 1 the new rates are in effect. This means that single adults on Ontario Works, the largest group accessing that program, received \$900 more this year than they did three years ago.

However, our social assistance programs provide much more than a cheque. Increased assistance, coupled with strong employment supports and skills training initiatives, helps people reconnect with the labour force and toward independence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the Minister of Community and Social Services for all of the important work that she has done, along with the thousands of ministry staff who serve the most vulnerable people in our province every day.

As the minister said, over the past three years there has been demonstrable progress to improve the supports offered by Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. But as we all may remember, it hasn't always been this way. Following the significant cuts made under the Progressive Conservative government in the 1990s and early 2000s, the social assistance system was left devastated, Mr. Speaker, and it is still now recovering. Minister, what has happened to the social assistance system since the Liberal government was first elected in 2003?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: This is an important question in order to understand where we have come from and how much progress has been made. When the PCs were in government, they cut social assistance, froze ODSP rates and downloaded the costs of social assistance to municipalities. Since 2003, our government has not only increased rates by 29% for individuals receiving Ontario Works, and 18.3% for families receiving Ontario Works and individuals receiving ODSP, but has also implemented an earnings exemption to allow recipients to earn up to \$200 a month without reducing their overall benefits.

We have had 11 continuous years of new investments in raising social assistance rates, providing help to over 900,000 vulnerable adults and children in Ontario every

day. That's why our government believes that further reforming social assistance is a key aspect of our effort to alleviate poverty.

HYDRO TRANSMISSION CORRIDOR

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Energy: With respect to the blockade of Caledonia power towers, Hydro One said recently, "We respected the request by the community to stop work." I represent that community. The community did not ask militants to seize control of Hydro One land running through Caledonia. The community did not ask for acetylene cutting torches placed at the base of transmission towers; for vehicles to drag part of a power tower down the main street of Caledonia, and to then blockade the town for a month; for the Mohawk warrior flag to fly over Caledonia, 300 feet up on a tower; or for the dismantled towers to be used as lookout towers. I witnessed all of this. The community did not ask for pieces of towers to be thrown from the Highway 6 overpass.

This transmission corridor must be completed. Now that the minister is selling Hydro One to the private sector, will they let the private sector do it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think the member knows the history of this particular transmission line. Construction was started, I think, around 2005. About 95% of it was completed. Then there was the land dispute around Caledonia, involving two First Nations and the federal government. There is a land claim issue that needs to be resolved by the federal government, which has the responsibility for that.

We have taken some steps to try to facilitate solutions by the two First Nations who are disputing with each other and disputing with the federal government. We had made some significant progress towards it, but we have not been able to resolve the issue.

It's a very sensitive issue. We're being respectful of First Nations in terms of waiting for these issues to be resolved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: After nine years, Paul Bliss from CTV News determined that not only did the Niagara Falls-New York power transmission corridor to nowhere cost \$100 million, but also, interest on the capital is ding taxpayers another \$50 million, growing by \$5 million a year for a truly stranded asset: newly built power towers that have never transmitted electricity.

As the Minister of Energy continues to centralize power in his cabinet office—to date, 37 ministerial directives and now Bill 135, disempowering IESO and the OEB. If the minister can't guarantee that the private sector will do it, will he now use his newfound authority to secure an injunction to resume construction after nine years and complete the wiring of these towers through Caledonia?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: There's a complex land negotiation claim under way in your area. It's been going on

for a number of years. The federal government is a key party to those negotiations. The federal government has not sat down in a meaningful way since 2009, when we had the last meeting.

There is a new government in Ottawa. There is a new minister of aboriginal affairs. I have read her mandate letter over. Her mandate letter is much like my mandate letter, and it stresses the need for the federal government to work with the provincial government and the First Nations involved to settle these complex and ongoing land claim matters.

I'm expecting to meet soon with my new federal counterpart in Ottawa. There is a new government. There are new players on the scene. We are hopeful of moving these issues forward.

POVERTY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the annual HungerCount report on food bank usage was released, and the results are shocking. Since 2008, food bank usage in Ontario has risen more than 14%, and 48.6% of food banks in Ontario are reporting an increase in use. More appalling still, nearly 34% of food bank users are children.

This government is failing families and children in need. Will the Premier admit that her government isn't doing enough to help families in need across this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services will want to comment on this, but I just want to say to the member opposite that of course we are all concerned about these statistics. In fact, it's why our government put in place a poverty reduction strategy. It's why we've put in place the Ontario Child Benefit, which has actually lifted thousands of children out of poverty.

We know there's more to be done. We just put in place a Local Poverty Reduction Fund.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But there is more to be done across the country—

Mr. John Yakabuski: More to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and the fact is that we have targets—

Mr. John Yakabuski: More to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just want to make sure that he heard me. Member from Renfrew: second time.

Carry on.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are 50,000 fewer children in poverty today because of the Ontario Child Benefit. We know there's more to be done, and we are continuing to take action.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: There is not one fridge for parents and another for children. These kids are living in poverty, using food banks regularly because their parents have no other choice, not to mention already marginalized people like those on disability income supports, making up one third of food bank users because they aren't being properly supported. More and more post-secondary students are being forced to use food banks because they don't have enough to buy food. Speaker, it's 2015. Food banks in Ontario should not be reporting increases in use.

Will the Premier admit that her government's failed policies are forcing vulnerable people to pay the price?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We do thank Food Banks Canada for the report that they issued yesterday. It does give us a good national picture of the problem of food security and hunger. But we also know that we have made steady progress, as the Premier just responded, and as I did in the previous question. We are lifting those most vulnerable up, in terms of increasing rates. We are improving the system in terms of partnerships with many of our community agencies.

The reference that the Premier made to the Ontario Child Benefit I think is particularly relevant. We know that we did increase that in July 2015 to \$1,336, and it is indexed to inflation for the very first time. So we are making steady progress on this issue.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Minister of Labour. These days, we are hearing more and more about precarious work and the nature of changing jobs in our province. It is common for Ontarians to be self-employed or have part-time and temporary employment. When I meet with businesses and workers in my riding, they tell me that our laws should reflect the realities of the modern economy. And we must ensure that they do so.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Labour launched the Changing Workplaces consultations some time ago. Can the minister update this House about those consultations?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for the excellent question because it really gives me the opportunity to update the House this morning on the Changing Workplaces consultations. As the member mentioned, since I announced the appointment of the special advisers earlier this year, they've been all over this great province. They have met with more than 200 groups in person. They've received close to 300 written submissions; they've been working through these submissions. I expect we're going to see their final report later next year, but in the interim, they're bringing in an interim report in February.

Submissions included solutions that came from Ontarians as to how we might address the plight of precarious workers across this province. I was pleased to see that so

many Ontarians from so many sectors came forward. We heard from employers; we heard from employees, trade unions and trade associations. We're really excited about the recommendations that people are bringing forward. How we adapt to these key changes is going to really determine how well we're able to protect workers going into the future. The process is going well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It sounds like the consultations were a great success. It is great to know that so many Ontarians decided to attend one of the scheduled consultations or took time to submit recommendations to the advisers. I know that people in my riding were able to participate, but I also know that some are still wondering if they are able to have their opinions heard.

Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that the consultations have ended. Minister, will there be further consultations for my constituents and opportunities for those across the province who have not yet done so to participate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Excellent question. This, I think, is one that all members can assist in this regard. As I mentioned previously, the formal consultation process has ended, but this does not mean the opportunity to submit written recommendations to the advisers is over. All of us should go back to our ridings and tell people that, after we share the interim report in the new year, in the early part, there's going to be a period of approximately six months when Ontarians are going to be able to submit more recommendations, more solutions. So I'd like to encourage every member in this House, from each of the parties represented in this House, to go back to their ridings and to ensure that people realize that another consultation period is coming up. We need everybody's help in this House to make sure that everyone is able to go home safe and sound at the end of every day. To realize that future we want, Speaker, we need to get solutions from Ontarians. I urge all members to participate.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2007, the Liberal government announced it was redeveloping 35,000 long-term-care beds. That's 3,500 beds per year over 10 years. By 2014, seven years since the original announcement, the ministry, having failed to implement and execute the plan the first time, simply reannounced the same: They're redeveloping aging long-term-care beds.

This government and its two health ministries have had eight years to review, plan and prioritize and, most importantly, to deliver the promised beds. It's nearing 2016, and the seniors in my riding and across Ontario want to know where the beds are and why this government is eight years behind schedule.

Will the minister responsible—as a minimum—release the schedule of bed redevelopments to this House?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for his question and his advocacy on long-term-care homes. I just want him and you to know, Mr. Speaker, and this House, that we take the redevelopment as a priority item for us. That's why I can say that since coming to office, we have already redeveloped 13,000 beds. In fact, very recently—in the early fall—I attended the official opening of yet another redevelopment. It was in Whitby. Fairview Lodge: 198 beds redeveloped, part of the 13,000 that we have already redeveloped.

The member opposite is right. We have committed to redeveloping another 30,000 beds. Work on that is well under way, and I look forward to making some announcements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: You've had 12 years, and you're telling me this is a priority and you only got a third of the way. Associate Minister, I've listened closely to your platitudes that you give to yourself and your party. I think it's clear they're nowhere near the start or, worse, the end of completion of construction.

Just so this House is clear: Under this government's watch, the number of long-term-care beds has increased by a mere 3%. However, the wait-list has exploded to 21,000 seniors, and 15% of our seniors die while on the wait-list. But, eight years later, the ministers responsible for our seniors' health and well-being can't so much as put together a schedule of when and where they will redevelop the beds. I asked you this in estimates.

Mr. Speaker, we believe our most frail citizens deserve better. Through you to the minister, I ask: Can the minister at least advise this House how much she budgeted for redeveloping old and for building new long-term-care beds in Ontario?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by reminding the member opposite that we've already redeveloped 13,000 beds and work is well under way for redeveloping an additional 30,000 beds. I'm also going to remind the member opposite that our original budget mentioned redevelopment of 30,000 new beds. If the member opposite and his party were that interested in the redevelopment, why did they vote against that budget, bring down a government, which delayed by months our ability to redevelop?

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. The OPG, Ontario's nuclear regulator, has just applied for an unprecedented 13-year licence extension for the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station. Typically, extensions are granted for periods shorter than five years, and a 13-year extension would effectively end public scrutiny of Darlington's emergency planning until the year 2028.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has since stepped in and said that they will hold their own consultations because of public concern. So will the Premier please offer her thoughts on why a federal panel appoint-

ed by Harper feels that the province is so non-transparent that they need to host consultations on their behalf?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I know the member realizes that for a period of over 45 years we've been operating nuclear facilities in the province. We're among the best measured, in terms of safety, worldwide.

1120

We also know that we're on the cusp of Darlington moving forward with refurbishment. That refurbishment will take us over several decades in terms of additional life out of these units.

Ontario Power Generation has been working very, very closely with the nuclear safety association of Canada. It's a federal regulatory responsibility. We're complying with all of the provisions and we're willing to live with the decision of the federal regulator on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Last week, Durham regional council passed a motion calling on the provincial government to be more transparent in reviewing nuclear emergency plans. The motion was originally put forward in June by former councillor Jennifer O'Connell, who has since been elected as the Liberal MP for Pickering-Uxbridge.

Will the Premier listen to the advice of Ms. O'Connell and the Durham regional council and commit to a more transparent process for Ontario's emergency planning?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member would also know, as well, that all of the municipalities in the Durham region are very, very supportive of nuclear power remaining. They're supportive of the refurbishment of the units so that they'll continue to provide the jobs.

Again, I want to repeat that we've been measured as among the safest jurisdictions in the world for nuclear energy. We will be 100% compliant with the federal regulatory agency on this particular issue.

REFUGEES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. My question concerns Ontario's response to the global refugee crisis. Given my own ethno-cultural background and linguistic affiliations, I find asking this question particularly poignant and urgent.

As I said yesterday in caucus regarding Premier Wynne's commitments—whether she's on the right side of politics, the right side of history or just on the right side—I salute her leadership.

Ontario has always welcomed people fleeing war, famine and persecution. With our 2013 Newcomer Settlement Program, we accept over 80,000 people annually. I respectfully ask the minister, what is our government doing to support the Syrian refugees in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member for Etobicoke North is absolutely right: This province and this country have a long tradition of welcoming refugees from all parts of the

world. In fact, Ontario welcomes more refugees and refugee claimants than any other part of this country.

Our province has committed to receiving our share of the 25,000 Syrian refugees that are expected in this country later this year. This is something that I know and believe all Ontarians should be extremely proud of. We're going to play a critical role in resettlement efforts. We're already working hand in hand with our federal partners. We've established an ad hoc cabinet committee on Syrian refugees chaired by Michael Chan, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and by myself.

We expect to hear details of the federal government's plan in the coming days, but we're well underway in our preparations here in the province to welcome and receive these refugees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Minister, as you know in both your professional and parliamentary capacities, health care is a human right, not a luxury. I know that health care facilities all over the province have committed to providing health care services to the Syrian refugees who will be coming to Ontario.

I also know that the leader of the official opposition was part of the, now thankfully past, dark ages, otherwise known as the Harper government, which voted to cut health care to some of the world's most vulnerable populations. This was just one of the many, many moves that made Canada unrecognizable to itself.

Minister, how will you re-Canadianize our refugee response?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was proud, 15 years ago—I was responsible for the refugee file, working in Lloyd Axworthy's office when he was foreign minister, and we invited and welcomed 5,000 Kosovar refugees over a period of just about a month. We succeeded in that. That's why I have confidence that we will succeed again.

I'm so proud of the outpouring of support from our local health partners right around the province. Hospitals, public health units, community health centres: Their response has been outstanding; they're so enthusiastic to help. We're developing an action plan in coordination with them. We're monitoring the situation in the Middle East in terms of any communicable diseases or other infections that we should be concerned about that would help alert us in terms of any immediate health needs or protections required. Most importantly, we're working with all our community partners out in civil society who have the expertise and the talent to work with us, including on that important issue of providing mental health supports and trauma counselling. We look forward to working with the federal government in the coming weeks.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. For years, this government has forced rural Ontario to foot the bill for Liberal mistakes. We paid for cancelled gas plants. We paid for the disastrous Green

Energy Act. We paid for eHealth and Ornge. Now we're paying for the new Hydro One CEO's \$4-million salary. Does the Premier agree that it would have been better to pay for things we actually need, things like rural infrastructure, or will she continue on her merry wasteful way?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's commendable that the member opposite is actually advocating for rural infrastructure because that is exactly what is at the heart of our decision to broaden the ownership of Hydro One. I think the member opposite knows full well, because he travels around from municipality to municipality, as we do on this side, that every municipality in this province—urban, rural, suburban—is looking to the provincial government for support in building infrastructure.

We are very committed. As the member opposite knows, we are allocating \$31 billion provincially between the GTHA and the rest of the province, and we are doing that by StatsCan data, by demographics, because we know that there is a need for equitable distribution of that infrastructure money. That means that rural infrastructure is critical.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Unfortunately, no one believes the Premier anymore. Two years ago, the government cancelled the Connecting Link Program even though it was working well. We fought tooth and nail to get this program back. It worked, but it came at a cost. Instead of funding the program as it used to be, the government is only putting in \$15 million, and \$15 million divided by 77 eligible municipalities doesn't go far. Worse yet, it looks like the government is going to make communities compete for the funds that they need.

Will the Premier commit today to making sure municipalities in Perth—Wellington are at the top of the list for Connecting Link funding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for his somewhat sudden interest in supporting infrastructure for communities across the province of Ontario. As one of my colleagues said earlier today, it's more than a little bit curious—and I'm sure people watching at home even from his own community are a bit perplexed because, month after month, year after year, that party, that caucus, that leader stand up and object and oppose every initiative brought forward by this Premier to invest in this province's infrastructure.

I'm so proud of the fact that we've re-established a stand-alone Connecting Link fund. Applications for those 77 communities are open as of this week. We look forward to continuing to work with them right across the province to make sure we keep building Ontario up.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. It was only two days ago that the NDP stood here in the Legislature and asked the government to stop leaving the

Ontario manufacturing sector behind. On that very same day, PowerBlades, a manufacturing plant in my riding of Welland, closed its doors, leaving 136 Ontario workers without a job, effective immediately.

This government talks a good game about attracting manufacturing, creating jobs and investment, but the proof is in the facts: 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost under the Liberal government.

Premier, my question is simple: What does the government have to say to those 136 people, workers, in my riding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're always concerned about any layoff in this province to any worker anywhere in the province. It's unfortunate that this company, which I believe is about 24 months old, didn't get the contracts they were hoping to get and weren't able to make a go of it. It is unfortunate for those workers. But the fact of the matter is, we're continuing to build manufacturing in this economy, and that's despite the fact that the opposition opposes us every step of the way.

1130

The member's party wants to see us put taxes on our manufacturers across Ontario, raise their corporate income taxes. That's going to take jobs away from a sector that's been on the rebound. We've seen \$2.5 billion of investment in the auto sector alone in the last 12 months. If we did what that party wanted us to do—raise their corporate taxes—those investments wouldn't be happening. We're going to keep fighting for manufacturing jobs and we're going to keep winning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: PowerBlades provided a livelihood for more than 100 people. Those were people who were already laid off from other manufacturing jobs in Welland. Now these families don't know where their next paycheque is coming from. So what's the advice that the Premier is receiving from Ed Clark, her privatization czar? Lower labour costs; selling off Hydro One, which we know will actually drive the electricity rates through the roof and make it much harder for companies to either expand or even stay open. It's clear the Premier shares Ed's definition of "a new day in manufacturing," which means leaving people behind and driving manufacturing jobs out of the province. Will the Premier commit to standing up for the hard-working people of Welland and across this province in the province's manufacturing sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We have committed more than any government in the history of this province when it comes to working in partnership with the manufacturing sector. We've invested \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker, and that has leveraged somewhere around \$15 billion in private sector investments and 60,000 manufacturing jobs, because we've had the courage to work in support of the private sector, working in partnership, unlike the party opposite who, every chance they get, vilifies our manufacturers, vilifies our companies that are providing jobs

for workers, and comes forward to this Legislature with their leader and their policy being to jack up taxes against those very manufacturers who are creating jobs across this province. We're going to keep working in partnership with our private sector—60,000 manufacturing jobs because of those partnerships and we're still building.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Mr. Speaker, right now the world is turning its attention to the United Nations Conference of the Parties in Paris. Alongside our global partners, Ontario and Canada will work hard to face this challenge, because we know climate change is not a distant threat to Ontario. It is already costing the people of Ontario. It has devastated communities, damaged homes, businesses and crops, and increased insurance rates. We also know that while we work to mitigate the root cause of climate change we will also have to adapt to new environmental realities. Can the minister please speak to the challenge of climate change in Ontario and specifically what Ontario will do to adapt to these challenges?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks to my friend for his question and his interest in this.

In the near term, Mr. Speaker, one of the most immediate challenges Ontario will confront will be water and food security issues related to climate change. Right now, as you know, California is in what is a projected 40-year drought, five years into severe drought. Anyone who looks at our food supply will know that about 90% of our tomatoes and broccoli and 74% of our lettuce come from California. That's one of the reasons we're working so closely with California.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As the Minister of Agriculture points out, we import \$4 billion worth of food, and climate change is going to impact on that. It will act upon us to look for more innovative ways to produce more of our own food.

The other issue, the one that keeps me up at night, is that over the next seven years our Arctic will be seven degrees warmer, and the implications—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you for that response, Minister. I know Ontario is in good hands and will be well represented by the minister and our Premier.

However, Canada's reputation on the world stage when it comes to the environment and combatting climate change has slipped over the last decade. It was encouraging to hear that our new Prime Minister has stated that Canada's years of being a less-than-enthusiastic actor on the climate change file are behind us.

My question: What have you been doing to prepare for the Paris summit and what does it mean to have a committed federal partner in Ottawa in combatting climate change?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the things that is happening, as has been reported, is that on the 23rd, Prime Minister Trudeau is hosting a meeting with our Premier, Premier Wynne, and the other Premiers to prepare for the COP21 meeting.

But I want to point out one thing: Ontario has played a leadership role, and our Premier has played an enormous leadership role. We had the Climate Summit of the Americas, which created a huge consensus among sub-national and infranational governments in Brazil and Mexico. It was actually viewed as one of the definitive meetings. The Toronto statement that came out of that really creates an international coalition around deep reductions.

We joined with Quebec to sign the Quebec declaration. Our Premier played a pivotal role in getting every single province and territory to sign on to a very substantial climate change declaration. We're going to Paris—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Warnings are never too late.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to correct my record in the answer I gave regarding Mr. Lougheed's legal expenses. I'd like to clarify that the government is not paying any of his legal fees.

VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to recognize my constituent who is visiting here at Queen's Park: Gillian Hutchinson, who is the parent of page Aislin Perry.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome a delegation visiting from the beautiful region of Abruzzo in central Italy. I would like to welcome Dottor Giuseppe Di Pangrazio, president of the regional council of Abruzzo; Guido D'Urbano, chief administrator of the Abruzzo region; and from Toronto, the president of the Ontario-Abruzzo Association, Grande Ufficiale Alberto Di Giovanni.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we proceed, I gave a couple of reminders during question period and I want one more reminder. There's a convention in this place that when you exit the House and you enter the House, or you cross to the floor in front of the mace, you bow to the Chair. You're not bowing to the individual; you're bowing to the Chair. It's a long-held tradition dating back to England. I would appreciate it if all members would see to that, as it helps bring the temperature down all the time. It focuses on the other issue: third-person dialogue—question to the Chair, answer to the Chair. Thank you for your co-operation.

DEFERRED VOTES

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour of Mr. Mauro's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggart, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Orazietti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Qadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daine
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Arnett, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Singh, Jagmeet
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Campbell, Sarah	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 46.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Hoskins has moved second reading of Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health

Care Consent Act, 1996. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To general government, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To general government.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FARMNORTH.COM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As this Legislature knows by now, I take every opportunity to promote northern Ontario. Today, I want to talk about an exciting addition to the agriculture sector. Yes, Speaker, farming is alive and well in northern Ontario. In fact, 50% of Ontario's canola and 40% of Ontario's oats are grown in northern Ontario.

I want to introduce you to farmnorth.com, a new and exciting website. It's a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in entering the agricultural sector in northern Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's John's daughter who designed it.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know that. Are you going to give me a chance? Are you cutting into my time now?

As the member stepped on me, Speaker, it was designed by our very own John Vanthof's daughter.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There we go. Yay.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I won't ask him why he hasn't introduced this yet, then. How's that?

The website is a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in entering the agricultural sector in northern Ontario. It provides profiles on 10 northern districts, including information such as number and type of farms, farm capital value and plant hardiness zone information. The site also provides information on relevant organizations, a directory of agri-business suppliers, research information and important community contacts to help to successfully enter the agricultural sector in the North.

Speaker, I'd like to thank all the organizations involved in the project for putting together such a comprehensive and easily accessible resource to promote northern agriculture: farmnorth.com.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the sake of the jocularity, I allowed it to go a little over.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

GILLER PRIZE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: First, a shout-out to Toronto author André Alexis. He is this year's winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize.

The Giller's connection to Windsor-Tecumseh was amazing this year, Speaker. An outstanding independent bookstore and publishing house in my riding, Biblioasis, had three books on the Giller's long list of 12, and two on the short list of five: Samuel Archibald's story collection, Arvida; and Anakana Schofield's novel, Martin John. The other one on the long list was Russell Smith's Confidence, which was also short-listed for a Writers' Trust award.

It is unheard of that a small, independent publishing house would have so many books selected, in a jury competition, among Canada's best of the year. And one of their poetry books, Robyn Sarah's My Shoes are Killing Me, won the Governor General's award for poetry.

Congratulations to Dan Wells and his team at Biblioasis, the small publishing house that roared this year.

Windsor's poet laureate, Marty Gervais, hosted another literary evening at Willistead Manor last week. It was standing room only as other poets laureate and remarkable poets from across the province shared stories and read from their collections. John B. Lee from Brantford was there, as was Mississauga's new poet laureate, Anna Yin; Roger Nash from Sudbury; Terry Burns from Owen Sound; and Debbie Okun Hill from Sarnia.

Poetry is alive and well, Speaker—further proof that we should have a provincial poet laureate here in Ontario.

CENTRAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize and celebrate Central Technical School's 100th anniversary. Central Tech is one of Toronto's oldest and largest high schools, and I'm proud to have it in the riding of Trinity-Spadina.

On October 16, I had the opportunity to attend an assembly at Central Tech to celebrate this important milestone. Over 2,000 former students attended the anniversary celebrations, which included a fundraiser to support programs at the school.

Central Tech has an important history. This school was built in 1915 to meet the growing needs of Toronto's employers for skilled tradespeople. Central Tech teaches academics alongside a variety of technical skills. Programs throughout its history include nursing, blacksmithing, optometry and aerospace programs.

This anniversary reminds us of the continued importance of the trades in Ontario. Graduates from trades programs, like those at Central Tech, form an essential part of our high-skill workforce. It is important that we encourage youth to enter the trades as both a vital and a fulfilling career.

I am proud of the impressive history of Central Tech. I rise today to congratulate Central Tech on their centennial anniversary, and the contributions the alumni, the staff and the students have made to the riding of Trinity-Spadina and the province of Ontario.

LUNG DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, as you know, November is Lung Month. During this month, there are many events occurring across the province that are highlighting the importance of breathing.

Today, I was at Women's College Hospital with the Ontario Lung Association celebrating World COPD Day. I had the chance to test my breath strength by taking a spirometry test and learn about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a lung disease that blocks airflow, making it difficult to breathe. As mentioned, our breathing capacity is tested by spirometry, a simple test used to diagnose asthma and other lung conditions like COPD. It takes only a few minutes but makes a huge difference in the long-term health and well-being of those who struggle to breathe.

More than 2.4 million Ontarians—that's one in five—live with a chronic lung disease, be it asthma, lung cancer or COPD. Lung cancer alone kills more than breast, ovarian, colon and prostate cancers combined.

It's unfortunate that we continue to live in a province where people are still struggling to breathe. Lung disease is the only chronic disease not to have a provincial focus or strategy. It's time we move to an Ontario lung health action plan. We have a bill here introduced by MPP Kathryn McGarry, one that we support. I call upon the government to bring this bill forward in committee so we can continue it on the process.

I would also be remiss if I didn't remind those in the House of the importance of making sure we do all that we can to help those who struggle to breathe to breathe with ease.

In May, together, we stood in reflection as we passed Ryan's Law, a law aimed at helping kids in Ontario schools breathe with ease. Although we celebrate the bill's passing, we are reminded of the terrible loss of life of Ryan Gibbons, whose name is stamped in the bill's pages. He lost his life at school when he could not access his inhaler in time.

Ryan's mother, Sandra, stood in this chamber on that day. Her tireless effort to make sure no parent loses a child was evident as we glanced over to see her frozen over us, a presence reminding us that we need to do more to help those who struggle to breathe.

Be proactive with your lung health because when you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

MARGUERITE WABANO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We have many people who are gathering in Moose Factory today on the passing of Marguerite Wabano, otherwise known as Gookum Wabano. She was the oldest surviving residential school person in the history of Canada. She died. She was 111 years old.

Marguerite, I've got to tell you, was quite the character. My dealings with Marguerite over the years have been nothing but great experiences, the times that

I've seen her. She had a sense of humour and a sort of sense about life that I think a lot of us can be able to take to heart. The one thing that she always talked about was the ability that people should develop in order to forgive.

She went, unfortunately, through the residential school experience when she was seven years old, at St. Anne's up in Fort Albany. She never talked about what happened there, but you know that it marked her life forever. Her dad and her mom, in order to deal with it, essentially took the kids and moved into the bush so that the provincial government at the time and the church couldn't get a hold of them. So they lived in the bush. They stayed there for years until the kids were old enough to come back into the community and not have to be snatched back into a residential school.

Through all of that, she kept her sense of humour. She learned to forgive and to move on. She was the mother to a number of children—25 grandchildren, 83 great-grandchildren, and many great-great-grandchildren are here today because of both her husband, Mr. Raphael Wabano, along with herself.

1510

I've just got to say that it's a pretty hard day today at Moose Factory because she was a great part of the life of the people who live in Moose Factory and on the James Bay coast. I know they're gathering today in order to say their goodbyes to somebody who is sorely going to be missed.

We all say, from here in this Legislature, to the family of Mrs. Wabano and friends, our thoughts are with you. We will miss Gookum Wabano because she was just bigger than life, and we are going to miss her.

HALTON LEARNING FOUNDATION

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about a great organization in my riding. The Halton Learning Foundation is a wonderful charity whose members work tirelessly to deliver quality education to students who need a little extra help. The foundation works to limit barriers to learning for needy kids.

I've been attending Halton Learning Foundation events for several years now, and I'm always touched by the emotional testimonies I've heard from young people who have benefited from the program. Last week, I attended the foundation's fundraising gala. The theme for the evening was "Imagine the Possibilities." It was a great event. One young woman talked about how the foundation helped her when she was facing serious challenges in her life. It was touching to hear how the funds provided helped keep her on track.

For other students, funds raised can mean groceries when the cupboard is bare, a warm coat for a chilly winter or support to leave an abusive situation. Mr. Speaker, these are challenging situations for children, and the Halton Learning Foundation offers vital help, guidance and hope. So far this year, the Halton Learning

Foundation has provided \$17,000 to young people across the region.

For more than a decade, the Halton Learning Foundation has been working closely with the Halton District School Board to assist students who need a helping hand. Just imagine the possibilities.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Last week, Chatham's Coca-Cola facility marked an impressive safety milestone. On November 2, the facility reached 1,000 days without a lost-time injury.

In touring the facility, I noticed posters that said PAUSE, and it stands for:

—Protect yourself with personal protective equipment;

—Be aware of your surroundings;

—Always use proper tools and equipment for the job;

—Stay focused; and

—Execute safely.

Coca-Cola operates a remanufacturing and make-ready facility in Chatham. Employees repair and refurbish equipment such as coolers and vending machines from across Ontario. The facility has continuously operated in Chatham since 1992 and currently employs 49 people in the community.

Coca-Cola Refreshments Canada has a stringent safety policy that empowers employees to be safety leaders. Company policies follow international best practices, and safety audits take place monthly in every facility.

Tony Caradonna is the manager of the facility in Chatham and his comments on the achievement demonstrate the commitment that management and employees share to safety: "Having the proper tools for the employees, having the proper training are the two main things. It definitely is a worthwhile investment, not only from a financial standpoint; it's good for morale, good for ... employee relations, customer relations."

Strong health and safety records, Speaker, don't happen by accident. It takes hard work and engagement from everyone in the facility. Congratulations to everyone at Coca-Cola in Chatham for a significant achievement. And by the way, together, let's set our next safety goal to be 1,500 days without a lost-time injury. I know you can do it.

CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is Children's Grief Awareness Day and I hope that all members will join me in wearing blue to recognize this day.

Before graduating from high school, one in 20 children will experience the loss of a parent—and this statistic doesn't account for the loss of a friend, sibling or other close relative.

These types of losses are devastating for all of us, even as adults. We all understand and recognize the pro-

found impact of grief in our own lives, but children grieve differently than adults. Kids who have lost a loved one might look and behave normally, all while experiencing inner turmoil, and many adults who lost a loved one as a child will still think of that death as a defining moment in their lives.

Children's Grief Awareness Day and the hard work of organizations like Rainbows for All Children Canada and their partners bring attention to the particular pain children suffer when they lose a loved one.

Thank you to all of those organizations for their work. I'll be wearing blue tomorrow in order to honour this important day, and I hope you will join me.

BOWMANVILLE HOSPITAL

Mr. Granville Anderson: The Bowmanville hospital is a staple of the community in Clarington, offering quality community health care. The staff work diligently to do their best with the infrastructure and equipment they have at their disposal, and I thank them for the care they take.

Tomorrow I will be attending the launch of a brand new CT scanner, one that is leaps and bounds ahead of the former in quality and technology. The new CT scanner will help reduce wait times and enhance care in our community. It was installed in Bowmanville and began scanning patients at the end of October, and replaces a 12-year-old machine that was slower and had less computing capabilities than most machines today.

It is my hope that this will signal further development for the hospital in the future, as my constituents constantly remind me of my passion for renewing the Bowmanville hospital, and the key role it plays in the communities east of Toronto.

Again, I thank the Bowmanville hospital for the hard work that they do, and I look forward to attending further announcements in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Ms. Malhi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to temporary help agencies / Projet de loi 143, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: This bill would establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies, and require them to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for the employee's services. It also requires employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment employees.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll be providing my remarks during statements by ministers.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC POLICY

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to stand today in the House for the introduction of the Budget Measures Act, 2015. This is a bill that fulfills commitments made by this government in the 2015 budget, and further implements our economic plan to build Ontario up.

This is a bill that makes many changes spanning several different ministries. If passed, it would enact five new statutes and amend other statutes. These changes are necessary, as we continue to implement our plan for Ontario: to make the right investments to grow the economy and create jobs. Today, I would like to briefly touch on a few of the amendments to the acts related to the Ministry of Finance.

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As you know, Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to unlocking the value of provincial assets and placing the net proceeds from the sale of qualifying assets into the Trillium Trust. These funds will then be used for public infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges and transit. The Budget Measures Act, 2015, seeks to make amendments to the Trillium Trust Act, 2014, which would specify these qualifying assets. This

bill would legislate that the net proceeds from the sale of the following would be placed into the Trillium Trust:

- Hydro One Ltd. shares;
- Hydro One Brampton shares;
- OPG headquarters real estate;
- LCBO headquarters real estate; and
- OPG's Lakeview generating station property.

This amendment would help us fulfill our commitment by investing more than \$130 billion in public infrastructure across the province over 10 years—investments to help our economy grow and enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians.

The Budget Measures Act, 2015, also seeks to make amendments to the Liquor Control Act, to support the sale of beer in grocery stores.

We're seeking amendments also to the Tobacco Tax Act. Contraband tobacco is a significant component of Ontario's underground economy. It undermines provincial health objectives under the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, results in less tobacco tax revenue for critical public services and compromises public safety through links with organized crime. If passed, the amendments would:

- create a bale-labelling system to assist the monitoring of raw leaf tobacco, including record-keeping requirements, seizure provisions, penalties and a new offence;
- establish reporting requirements regarding the import, export and transportation of raw leaf tobacco;
- allow the ministry to share information collected under the act in respect to raw leaf tobacco with Agricorp and the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board; and
- allow ministry inspectors to obtain samples of raw leaf tobacco found during an inspection.

These amendments would strengthen the raw leaf tobacco oversight regime to help us address contraband tobacco in the province.

We're also proposing to make an amendment to the Electricity Act, 1998. We've already taken action to reduce electricity cost pressures for Ontario households. As previously announced, we're removing the debt retirement charge from residential electricity users beginning January 1, 2016. Currently, business and other electricity users must continue to pay the debt retirement charge until it is determined that the residual stranded debt has been retired and a notice is published to that effect in the Ontario Gazette.

If passed, the proposed amendment would end the debt retirement charge for all electricity users in Ontario on April 1, 2018. This means that commercial, industrial and non-residential electricity users would stop paying the DRC nine months earlier than previously estimated and give them certainty to help them make investment decisions. This would save a typical large industrial company about 7%, a large northern industrial company more than 8%, and small businesses about 4% on their electricity bills.

Other proposed changes in the Budget Measures Act, 2015, include: improving and streamlining the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario; enhancing benefits for injured workers; and improving the management of corporate land forfeited to the province.

I look forward to speaking about these and other changes, and to the robust debate that will develop in this Legislature.

These proposed changes are part of this government's four-point economic plan to build Ontario up. We're doing this by investing in people's talent and skills, making the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history, creating a dynamic and innovative environment where businesses thrive, and building a secure retirement savings plan. That's why I ask the members of this assembly to support the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to stand and provide some remarks this afternoon.

Our government, as everyone here knows, is building Ontario up by investing in crucial transit and transportation infrastructure right across the province of Ontario. We are making one of the largest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You'll have time to respond later.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —I would argue, the largest—infrastructure investment in this beautiful province's history: more than \$130 billion over the next 10 years. This unprecedented investment is the result of working closely with and listening to our municipal partners.

Our ambitious plan is about repairing existing infrastructure and building much-needed new infrastructure, which will help keep our communities strong, create jobs and ensure that people get the services that they expect and deserve.

Our historic investment will create or sustain 110,000 jobs each and every year, which will help to support thousands of skilled tradespeople and their families.

It will ensure as well that commuters and commercial goods can travel more effectively on transit, on roads and on highways.

Research shows us, Speaker, that these investments are needed. Municipalities are telling us, and so are commuters and businesses. In fact, Ontario's population is expected to grow by approximately 40% by 2041. This will place additional importance on having modern infrastructure to support a growing population.

Research also shows that every \$100 million invested in public infrastructure in Ontario boosts our GDP by \$114 million, particularly in the construction and manufacturing sectors. So, Speaker, this is good news for our economy too.

Ontario's infrastructure investments are supported by a number of important initiatives, including broadening the ownership of Hydro One, an approach that raises billions of dollars for infrastructure while ensuring consumers are protected. By unlocking the value of provincial assets, the government is supporting critical projects in cities, towns, and rural and remote communities across Ontario.

We're working to create more jobs and ensure a bright future for our province. Between April and September of this year, we announced support for more than 200 projects that will keep people and goods moving, strengthen our economy, connect communities and improve our quality of life.

Just last week I announced details regarding two key infrastructure-related initiatives that will help build Ontario up.

First, I was delighted to be in Guelph to discuss the Connecting Link Program that's being re-established. Connecting Link is a new, revitalized, \$15-million annual program to help support municipalities. Connecting links, of course, are the roads and bridges in a number of municipalities that connect provincial highways. The new program provides a sound basis to make provincial funding decisions and ensures that provincial financial accountability and asset management requirements are met. We consulted municipalities across the province and heard the need to introduce a new Connecting Link Program, and most importantly, we listened. By supporting communities with these connecting links, we're helping to reduce the financial burden on those municipalities while making travel and quality of life better for Ontario families.

The new program will help municipalities cover the costs of bridge replacements, pavement rehabilitation, storm sewer construction and intersection improvements. Projects will be funded up to 90%, to a maximum of \$3 million. There are, Speaker, 352 kilometres of connecting links, including 70 bridges in 77 Ontario municipalities. They are the everyday roads and highways that people rely on to get to work or to school and then back home again safely. Ensuring that they are in a state of good repair is crucial to both the well-being of the travelling public and the economy of Ontario.

As I announced last week in Guelph, I am delighted to say that municipalities can apply for this funding starting November 19, which I believe is tomorrow. Funding for the new program is expected to begin in the spring of 2016.

Also last week, I announced that the Ontario government is providing more than \$332 million this year in gas tax funding to 95 municipalities' transit systems across Ontario. What does this mean? It means that we're helping municipalities expand and improve their public transit. This year's amount exceeds last year's by more than \$11 million.

Since 2004, the Ontario government has committed more than \$3.4 billion in total gas tax funding to municipalities. In 2013, we made funding for the gas tax

program permanent. This enables municipalities to better plan on how to improve their local public transit, help ease congestion and help reduce air pollution. This commitment is another example of how we have listened to and worked closely with our municipal partners.

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Gas tax funds help the hundreds of thousands of family members and commuters who depend on public transit to get to work or to get to school and then get back home safe and sound. More importantly than anything else, it's clear that our investments are working.

Last year, there was an increase of more than 217 million passenger trips on municipal transit systems compared to 2003. This is the equivalent of removing approximately 181 million car trips from our roads. We will continue working to boost transit ridership and help municipalities so that they, in turn, can upgrade transit infrastructure, increase accessibility, purchase transit vehicles, add more routes and extend hours of service.

We know how important public transit is to improving mobility, managing congestion, curbing emissions and building strong communities. This is why we continue to invest in priority transit and transportation projects to build an integrated transportation network across the province under our Moving Ontario Forward plan. Through Moving Ontario Forward, the province is making \$31.5 billion available over 10 years for investments in priority infrastructure projects across Ontario, such as public transit, roads, bridges and highways. This includes about \$16.5 billion in funding for priority rapid transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, including GO Transit's regional express rail and LRT projects in Mississauga and Hamilton.

Regional express rail is a plan that will provide faster and more frequent GO rail service on the GO Transit network with electrification on core segments of GO rail's network, including the Union Pearson Express. Our province needs to invest in a strong foundation of public infrastructure to promote economic growth for today but also for tomorrow.

That's why, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks today, our government is making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history: more than \$130 billion over the next decade. Our plan is about improving quality of life for families, communities and all Ontarians. Our two most recent infrastructure-related announcements, Connecting Links and gas tax transit funding, are just part of how we're achieving this.

All of our investments are part of our plan to build Ontario up with clear, predictable and long-term commitments to infrastructure in communities of all sizes: by building and improving roads, bridges, transit, hospitals and schools; by strengthening our electricity grid and energy infrastructure; and by helping connect rural communities and expanding Internet access. Our plan is about ensuring that all of Ontario's communities can thrive and prosper for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

This is a perplexing document we received from the minister today. Of course, we had no notice. This is news to all of us today, so it's hard to take these several hundred pages and put them into a two-minute response here when we haven't had a chance to read them. But I have read the summary, I have listened to the minister's response, and all I can say to you is, none of the numbers that this government provides us can be trusted. The fall economic statement was due on the 15th of the month; we did not receive it. This is not the first time we've not received materials that are prescribed by the act.

Nonetheless, we did hear loudly and clearly from the Financial Accountability Officer on two occasions recently: first on the stats where he told us that we're not on track to balance by 2017-18—in fact, we can expect a \$3.5-billion deficit; and he also told us about Hydro One, the sale, where he told us, "If you really need the money, then it's cheaper for you to go and borrow it"—not that I agree with the borrowing—"than to sell off this one-time asset, losing the lifetime stream of revenue for a one-time gain." We call that, in business, burning the furniture to heat the house.

Now, I can tell you, Speaker, that last year—we know some time ago, money was borrowed; our deficit grew. Money was borrowed to purchase the GM shares. When the GM shares were sold last year, instead of retiring the debt, we put that into operating. This year, we're going to sell Hydro One. They will tell you that money is for transit, but we have proved many, many times, over and over, in their own words, that that money is not going to transit. In the infrastructure budget of 2014, all of the money was accounted for, for the \$130 billion. It didn't need the Hydro money. Now, of course, we are seeing that—next year, they're telling us they're going to sell the OPG headquarters, the LCBO, the Lakeview Generating property. All we're seeing is a continuation of burning the furniture to pay the heat, and that, sadly, is what this report from the minister continues to do.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Harris: I always appreciate the opportunity to speak to the transit and transportation priorities of this government, especially when there is so much on the transit file being promised and yet so much that seems to be going off the rails. In fact, I just got out of two hours of questioning the deputy minister and the CEO of Metrolinx at Public Accounts about investments in transit and transportation—questioning the \$450 million into the UP Express trains that leave the station at 10% ridership capacity due to out-of-reach price points, the multi-millions in cost overruns at Presto and Union Station redevelopment, and the continued delays and diversions on announced regional transportation plans.

I've always said that this minister is great at making announcements. It's the delivery—where the rubber hits

the road, as it were—where he consistently comes up short. Then, oft-times, the investments that he does deliver on are questionable at best.

Take the HOV lane debacle. Today it was revealed that Ontario spent \$3.2 million on the slapdash peel-and-stick markers for unpopular HOV lanes during the Pan Am games. These are the same HOV lanes that, as we predicted, led to traffic chaos and a 73% increase in accidents. Not only did the minister's plan compromise our safety, but we had to shell out another \$3.2 million for that privilege. Even as we hear the minister crow about investments past, promised or planned, I know that many across this province continue to wait for the delivery of commitments that may never come.

The minister likes to talk about regional express rail. Well, let's talk about regional express rail. Just before the last election, the new Premier told people in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo that they would have all-day, two-way GO service to and from Kitchener. She would we would have additional trains "immediately." The previous Minister of Transportation indicated that we would see all-day two-way within five years. We are still waiting. We continue to wait even as the minister and his parliamentary assistant attempt to divert attention from their promises and point to jurisdictional hurdles in their way, as if they weren't aware of those issues when they first made the commitments to garner those votes—promises and commitments that are often made but often undelivered. Even the minister himself admitted to me in committee last year that there are a lot of announcements and commitments that MPPs make during elections that are aspirational in nature.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Transportation.

I think the Auditor General's report says it best. She targets three things in terms of Metrolinx, the transit agency's performance. She said that the targets aren't clearly defined; the long-term funding is in grave doubt; and there doesn't seem to be any ability to work with the municipalities to bring any of this to fruition.

The example is, of course, the ghost train that runs from Union to Pearson and back through our ridings, spewing diesel, ringing bells until 1 in the morning, and yet not providing transit to anybody in my riding who desperately need a relief line to get downtown. And of course, we know that it's running at less than half the projected ridership. It is a ghost, white elephant train, no doubt.

I have been asking for a year just for something very simple, something the TTC happily provides, which is: What projects are you working on? When are those projects going to be delivered? How are you going to pay for those projects? Must I say this—clearly. The public has a right to know. The public needs to know what the Ministry of Transportation is doing with their money. They still can't get on the bus.

1540

The main point I want to make is, Torontonians—I can tell you this—are really tired of political promises when they're waiting for that streetcar on Queen Street, when they're waiting for two subways going by. They want transit. They don't want promises. They've had enough of them.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm here to respond to the minister's statement on a follow-up to last year's budget, which is where the disastrous sale of Hydro One first started. We received this act just moments ago, but I can say with some confidence that we have the right and we have enough information to comment on it.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to remind the members of this Legislature and all Ontarians about what we've lost since the government decided a hasty fire sale of our province's electricity distribution system was in the best interests of—well, I can't say it was in the best interests of the people of this province.

I also can say that this Premier, though, and this government, will have overseen the largest transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector in the history of this province, all under this promise that they will be investing in infrastructure, when last year's budget—this government did not even honour their budgetary commitment to infrastructure; a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Last year's budget set the steps in motion to privatize Ontario's Hydro One. That's why New Democrats voted down all sections related to the selling off of Hydro One, and we continue to fight this short-sighted sale and privatization of a public asset.

One hundred and eighty-five municipalities, Mr. Speaker, have passed motions asking this government to stop the sale of Hydro One. And as I mentioned, the 2015 budget significantly reduced the oversight powers over Hydro One. In an unprecedented move, eight independent officers of the House called on the Premier to reverse this decision.

Most recently, the Financial Accountability Officer said that the selling off of Hydro One is a bad financial decision. "In years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale."

Once this government sells off 60% of Hydro One, the province stands to lose up to \$500 million a year in the long run. This is money that could have been spent on education, on health care, on poverty reduction. Unfortunately for Ontarians, that money is as good as gone.

Ontario's net debt will also be even higher after the sell-off of Hydro One, leaving a significant burden on future generations of Ontarians and less money for health care, for education, and even infrastructure. And on top of all of that, once 60% of Hydro One is sold off, the province will see a permanent reduction to its bottom line as a result of this transaction.

Reading very quickly through the compendium that was just delivered to us, it's very clear to me that the

finance minister woke up last week and realized that he hadn't done anything on contraband tobacco, which is what he blamed the loss in revenue on last year when the fall economic statement came forward.

Of course, we're going to be looking through this budget act very carefully, because it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are serious trust issues with the finances and the economic projections that are coming from the Liberal government and the province of Ontario, and we will hold them to account.

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from, really, all over my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I'd like to thank Estelle Lâbre from my riding, in Hammer, for submitting this petition, and I will send it to the Clerk with Ross.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no" value;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and send it down with page Keana.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to present a petition: "Hydro One Not for Sale.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I sign this petition and send it down to the table with Hannah.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition was brought to me by a senior in my riding who worked so hard to make this happen. I know Joan is watching at home today, so thank you to Joan Faria.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care homes are chronically understaffed and unable to provide the service residents need; and

"Whereas residents of long-term-care homes are often left unattended for hours at a time; and

"Whereas despite legislation to combat abuse, the media continues to report horrific stories of abuse of residents in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas elder abuse often goes unreported;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—demand that the government amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide for a minimum of four hours of care each day per resident and that the standard

of care should include a requirement that each resident receive at least three baths per week; and

“—demand that the government increase inspections of long-term-care homes; and

“—demand that the government require all long-term-care homes to post, in a place accessible to all, information on the duty to report abuse and the whistleblower protection included in the Long-Term Care Homes Act and that the same information be given to residents and their families upon initial admittance and to staff upon hiring.”

Thank you so much, Joan. I’m going to apply my name to this and give it to the page to bring to the Clerk.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. I’d just like to thank Lucas Malinowski, who was instrumental in helping me—although he’s still searching for letterhead, but we’ll come through for him, Speaker.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l’envoie avec page Michelle.

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HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. You got it right.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this and will hand it off to page Aislin.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pain management services, including injections, are essential for maintaining the overall quality of life of people who live with chronic pain;

“Whereas many people who cannot access effective and timely pain management treatment have to leave work and school and, as a result, become dependent on social services to make ends meet;

“Whereas there is limited research available in Canada for many of the conditions that could benefit from more frequent pain management injections; and

“Whereas much of the American literature on this topic meets and even exceeds the standards for scientific rigour in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to accept American literature that meets the Canadian standards of scientific rigour when determining who will receive special permissions and funding for more frequent pain management injections.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Ross.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario farmers were prevented from meaningfully participating in government consultations around changes to allowable crop protection tools during the spring of 2015 due to the government scheduling consultations during prime planting season;

“Whereas the regulations the government of Ontario passed on Canada Day severely restrict the use of treated seeds that are of critical importance for grain farmers in preserving their crop yields and these changes are expected to cost Ontario’s economy over \$600 million a year;

“Whereas it will be virtually impossible for farmers to access these necessary treated seeds for the 2016 planting

season due to the bureaucratic hurdles being put in place by the province;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to suspend the class 12 regulations that were passed on July 1, 2015, to allow for farmers to plant in 2016, as they did in 2015; to allow for meaningful dialogue on the regulations, their intent and other approaches to achieving the same end, that won't devastate farmers in the province."

I agree with this petition.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Michael Mantha: J'ai une pétition présentée par plusieurs personnes du nord de l'Ontario.

« Hydro One, pas à vendre!

« Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit un projet de privatisation qui entraînera une hausse des tarifs d'électricité, une baisse de la fiabilité et des centaines de millions de dollars en moins pour nos écoles, nos routes et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que le projet de privatisation sera particulièrement préjudiciable pour les communautés du Nord et des Premières Nations; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit ce projet de privatisation dans le secret, faisant que les Ontariens n'ont pas un mot à dire sur un changement qui affectera sérieusement leur vie; et

« Attendu qu'il n'est pas trop tard pour annuler le projet;

« Compte tenu de cela, nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« Que la province de l'Ontario annule immédiatement son projet de privatisation du réseau de distribution d'électricité de l'Ontario. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition, et je la présente à la page Keana pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this and send it to you via page Aaron.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Ajay.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here entitled "Save Our Northern Health Care," which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas government cuts have a direct impact on patient care and front-line workers;

"Whereas hospital base operating budgets have been frozen for four years in a row and hospital global funding increases have been set below the rate of inflation since 2008, meaning that hospital budgets have been cut in real dollar terms ... for eight years in a row;

"Whereas Ontario government funding figures show that home care funding per client is less today than it was in 2002;

“Whereas Ontario hospital funding is the lowest in Canada;

“Whereas Ontario ranks eighth out of 10 provinces in hospital funding as a percentage of provincial GDP; and

“Whereas the government has actually refused to acknowledge that service cuts are happening;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately stop cuts and freezes to hospital budgets;

“To immediately cease the laying off of nurses and other front-line workers; and

“To fund hospitals adequately to ensure highest quality patient care across the province.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Hannah to deliver to the table.

EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund medically necessary treatment for Canadians; and

“Whereas a growing number of people in Ontario suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) have to seek out-of-country treatment at their own expense because doctors in Ontario don’t have the knowledge or skills to understand EDS symptoms and perform the required delicate and complicated surgeries; and

“Whereas those EDS victims who can’t afford the expensive treatment outside of Ontario are forced to suffer a deteriorating existence and risk irreversible tissue and nerve damage; and

“Whereas EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors, bowel and bladder issues, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders, severe fatigue and many others resulting in little or very poor quality of life; and

“Whereas despite Ontario Ministry of Health claims that there are doctors in Ontario who can perform surgeries on EDS patients, when surgery is recommended the Ontario referring physicians fail to identify any Ontario neurosurgeon willing or able to see and treat the patient;

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“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Require the Minister of Health to provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who can—and will—perform surgeries on EDS patients with equivalent or identical skills to the EDS neurosurgeon specialists in the United States, and meet the Canada Health Act’s requirement to afford equal access to medical treatment for patients, regardless of their ability to pay for out-of-country services.”

I’ll sign this and send it down with page Ajay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that:

Whereas Ontario’s Financial Accountability Office has reported that “with the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province’s budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale”;

Whereas Ontario’s Financial Accountability Office has discredited the government rationale for selling Hydro One by showing that while the government claimed the sale would raise \$4 billion in new cash for infrastructure, the sale may raise as little as \$1.4 billion;

Whereas the government claimed the sale would reduce the provincial debt by \$5 billion, and the Financial Accountability Office showed the sale will actually increase the debt by \$2.7 billion by 2025;

Whereas the sale of Hydro One will mean losing half a billion dollars in stable, annual revenues;

Whereas selling Hydro One will mean less revenue to invest in transit, health care or education;

Whereas the Liberal government has sold approximately 15% of Hydro One, but the government can stop the sale of any further shares;

Whereas there is still time for the Premier and cabinet to halt the sale of all of the remaining shares of Hydro One;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the government shall immediately stop the sale of any more shares in Hydro One.

This is addressed to the Premier, Speaker, and I look forward to debating it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I’m pleased and proud to rise not just on behalf of New Democrats in our caucus, but on behalf of 80% or more of the people of this province who do not want to see Hydro One sold off to the private sector. That’s what this opposition day motion is about: ending the sell-off of Hydro One. It is about the individual members of this House, who sit during these kinds of debates as members of this House—to actually get the government to do the right thing when it comes to this file.

This motion, in short, calls for an immediate stop to the sale of any more shares in Hydro One. There is still time for the Premier, the Liberal government and the Liberal backbench MPPs to do the right thing by the people of this province.

In 2013, New Democrats and I pressed this government to create a Financial Accountability Officer in order to assist the government in making sound financial decisions. I think most Ontarians will remember the sordid history of Liberal governance in this province and know the huge mistakes that the Liberals have made time after time after time when it comes to the ideas that they bring forward and then implement: everything from the

eHealth debacle to the gas plant scandal to the Ornge air ambulance scandal to the unbelievable situation with our P3 model that allows this government to spend over \$8 billion more than it should have in the last couple of years on infrastructure. The list goes on and on and on.

Back in 2013, people in this province were saying, "Enough is enough. This Liberal government needs to do better. They have to stop being so wasteful and so inappropriate with public money." New Democrats agreed. We did what we could at that time, in the minority Parliament, to force the Liberals to actually pay attention to the money that they were spending, to pay attention to what it was that they were doing in terms of plans that they were making and implementing on behalf of Ontarians.

The way that we did that is by having this Financial Accountability Officer put in place so that this person could give the straight goods and true non-biased, non-partisan advice to the government on how to ensure that their decisions that they were going to be making were fiscally sound, had financial ground to stand on. What we thought is that it would increase transparency and it would ensure Ontarians would get the facts on how the government, in fact, intends on spending their money.

What happened just recently is that the office that was agreed to back in 2013 finally has become the standard here in Ontario. The Financial Accountability Officer was able to look at one of the upcoming plans of the Liberal government, which is the sell-off of Hydro One, and Ontarians were able to see the first report of the Financial Accountability Officer on that file.

What that first report concludes, very clearly, is that the sell-off of Hydro One is bad for Ontario families, it is bad for Ontario businesses and it is going to be hurtful, harmful, and bad for our province's bottom line. Now, that's not New Democrats saying that. That's not even the over 80% of Ontarians who are saying that. That's not just the chamber of commerce that's saying that or the over 185 municipalities that are saying that. That is what the Financial Accountability Officer is saying, somebody who has been hired by the people of this province, at the request—at the forcing—of New Democrats to put this office in place back in 2013. That's what this person is saying, this independent person, who has no agenda except that, actually, his job is to try to help the government to not make stupid decisions anymore and to make decisions that are appropriate and meaningful and will help get the province further along. Unfortunately, as we saw, the Financial Accountability Officer's advice has not yet been taken up by the Liberals. But we hope to change that today, Speaker. We hope to change that today.

The report is clear that selling off Hydro One is the worst way possible. He says that directly. He said that, responding to media questions: that the selling off of a revenue-generating asset like Hydro One is the absolute worst way to fund infrastructure in the province of Ontario. You can't get away from it. That is what he said, and he is absolutely right.

As I mentioned before, that's not just New Democrats saying that or the FAO. It's all kinds of other folks who agree. Unfortunately, our Premier is either too stubborn or has some other agenda than to actually pay attention to the good, unbiased and financially sound advice being provided by this independent officer. It is the worst way to raise money for transit. It is the worst way to raise money for infrastructure. It will cost this province hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue: about \$500 million—half a billion dollars—in annual revenue. It will ultimately add to our debt.

Now, I believe that the sell-off of Hydro One is the defining moment for the Premier of this province. The Premier told Ontarians, if you recall, Speaker, that her goal was to lead "the most open and transparent government in Canada."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What happened to that?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Who knows what happened to that?

Last summer, the FAO—the Financial Accountability Officer—called out her government, called out Kathleen Wynne's government, the Premier of this province, on stonewalling him and denying him the information that he needed to do his job on behalf of Ontarians. That's what happened. He was looking to get the information that he needed to actually report on the sell-off of Hydro One, and what did this Liberal government do? Instead of being open and transparent, instead of providing the information to the Financial Accountability Officer, this government stonewalled and refused to provide the necessary information that the FAO was looking for.

And now what is this government doing? They're completely ignoring his report. How irresponsible is that, Speaker? How irresponsible and arrogant is that? It is shameful, and it absolutely is a defining moment for this Premier and for this government. Instead of being open, the Premier is tearing a page out of Stephen Harper's playbook, and it is so obvious: Deny information to Ontario's independent watchdogs and then ignore their findings. It is Stephen Harper 101. Instead of being open and accountable, the Premier is standing arrogantly opposed to any scrutiny, and the Liberals have demonstrated time and time again that they are much more interested in undermining our watchdogs than in making decisions based in fact and based in the best interests of Ontarians. Because that is what those watchdogs do: They look after the interests of Ontarians. They recommend to the government things that need to be done differently so that Ontarians can be served better. But the Liberals are not interested in serving Ontarians better; they're interested in serving themselves and their friends better. That's what they're interested in.

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The fact is that on October 29, for the very first time, Ontarians did see the evidence that the Financial Accountability Officer brought forward, evidence that confirms what New Democrats have been concerned about for months and months before that. The independent Financial Accountability Officer has written in black and

white that the sale of Hydro One will leave the province in worse financial shape. The FAO debunked literally every argument put forward by the Premier to justify the sell-off.

The Premier said that this sell-off would secure \$4 billion for transit and infrastructure—\$4 billion—but according to the FAO, the person who actually did the real homework on the numbers, it may not even bring in \$1.4 billion—not even half that amount. That's right: not even half of the \$4 billion is what the FAO is flagging as a risk in terms of the government's claims around what they're going to raise with this sell-off. It could raise less than half. This means that the one-time proceeds from the sell-off of Hydro One could actually contribute about 1% of the \$130 billion of transit and infrastructure promises that this Premier has made. It's a scratch on the surface.

The Premier said that the sell-off of Hydro One would reduce the province's debt by about \$5 billion. That was the other promise. They said \$9 billion would be raised; \$4 billion would go to transit and infrastructure investments, and \$5 billion would go to debt reduction. That's how Kathleen Wynne, our Premier, talked about it. That's how she sold it. That was her marketing pitch. And as the FAO has clearly indicated in his report, none of that stuff stands up to scrutiny.

On the \$5 billion, in fact, the FAO said it will actually increase the debt of our province. The FAO said that the debt of our province will not decrease by \$5 billion as the Premier has claimed, but in fact, the debt will increase by \$2.7 billion in the long run with the sell-off of Hydro One. Now how shameful is it that the Liberals are ignoring this very clear criticism, this very clear evidence that they've made the wrong decision, and instead they're plowing ahead?

And that's not all: The Liberals are also waving bye-bye to nearly \$500 million each and every year in lost revenues—half a billion dollars in lost revenues each and every year. That's what the Liberals are doing with the sell-off of Hydro One. That's why New Democrats are gobsmacked that this Liberal government would be so Conservative in their actions—I'm saying big C Conservative. If we wanted the sell-off of revenue-generating assets, we should have just had Tim Hudak elected in the last election. Instead, Liberals were elected, and who knew? We got the Hudak agenda with Kathleen Wynne at the helm. Half a billion dollars of revenue each and every year is something that this province cannot afford to give up, but Katherine Wynne and the Liberals are handing it over to the shareholders that are now buying shares in Hydro One.

There comes a point in the tenure of every single Premier that stands out in the minds of voters. I don't think anybody needs to be reminded of what Dalton McGuinty's claim to fame was, but what we know for sure is that in this case, we have seen a series of actions that speak volumes about the priorities of this government. That happens all the time. Often we see that, that point when the voters, when the people of a province, look to a series of actions that actually speak to the priorities of government.

The Premier said that the selling off of Hydro One would secure \$4 billion for infrastructure investment. They said it would help families with better public transit and less congestion on the roads. But now we have the evidence, Speaker, and the evidence is very, very clear. The privatization of Hydro One will not help any person; will not help anyone who is trying to squeeze onto the King streetcar at 7 o'clock in the morning to get to work on time. That will not happen. It's frankly not going to help any of those folks who are trying to get to work or home from work to their families on transit, whether it's here in the city of Toronto or anywhere else.

There is no question in the mind of anyone sitting in this House that decades of neglect have left our highways in disrepair and our bridges crumbling. Our buses, streetcars and subways are packed with riders who really just want to get to work on time or home to the family at the end of the day. It's hard for moms and dads who have to do that each and every day; there's no doubt about it.

The failure of successive governments in Ontario to invest in infrastructure hurts our economy and hurts our prosperity. In the GTA alone, there have been estimates that congestion is costing the economy upwards of \$6 billion a year in lost economic opportunity. Everybody in Ontario—every part of Ontario—feels the need for better infrastructure, be it transit, be it roads, be it bridges, be it buses.

Cities like London, for example, are taking steps to build rapid transit networks—as the Chair of Management Board giggles on the other side of the House—but they are suffering from Liberal cuts to municipal transit. Instead of tackling these challenges with smart solutions, the Premier has used the real needs of our communities to make a false argument for the sale of Hydro One.

The Premier has insisted that Ontarians can have either Hydro One or infrastructure investment, but not both. Forgive me, Speaker, but what a crock. That is so untrue, and it is so unbelievable that this Premier is insulting the intelligence of Ontarians by putting that false argument forward. It is almost laughable, except that it is such a serious issue that there's nothing funny about it at all.

What the Financial Accountability Officer showed is that we can actually build more infrastructure by keeping Hydro One in public hands. That's what the Financial Accountability Officer showed: We can actually build more infrastructure, more transit, by keeping Hydro One public.

But this debate isn't about infrastructure, Speaker, and it never has been. We all agree that Ontario needs new, modern and expanded infrastructure. Ontarians know that we can invest in hospitals, schools, roads and transit, and keep hydro public. They know that. They know there are other options, and so do we. There are smarter choices. There are better choices that New Democrats have been calling for.

Choices like asking the largest and most profitable corporations to pay their fair share in corporate taxes: Do you know, Speaker, that here in the province of Ontario

we have a combined corporate tax rate that is less than the tax rate in the state of Alabama? How shameful is that? How progressive a province are we that we have a combined corporate tax rate that is lower than that of the state of Alabama? Shame on Kathleen Wynne and shame on the Liberals for pretending that we somehow have to sell off Hydro One instead of just having the leaders of industry and the corporate sector, who want to see gridlock removed, belly up to the plate and pay their fair share at a higher corporate tax rate. That's what needs to happen in the province of Ontario.

Smarter choices: for example, like putting a stop to new opportunities that the Liberals have just given the CEOs and top executives of this province to be able to get a full refund on all the HST they pay on things like box seats at the Rogers Centre or luxury dinners with their clients. I don't get that, Speaker. Do you get that? Why do these folks need an HST rebate on luxury meals, luxury transportation and box seats? That's hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars that the Liberals have agreed to allow those folks to simply get rebated on. Those hundreds of millions of dollars each and every year could be going to build transit and infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

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There are many, many ways to actually peel this orange, Speaker. There are many ways to fund infrastructure here in this province. We absolutely do not need to sell off Hydro One, and pretty much everybody knows it except Kathleen Wynne and her caucus and her cabinet and their friends. They're about the only ones who actually don't know that there are other ways to do this.

The truth is, as I've said, the Liberals' privatization scheme has never really been about infrastructure because it's only going to get us 1% of the \$130 billion that they're promising in infrastructure. It has never been about making life easier for families because, of course, we all know that hydro rates are going to go through the roof as they continue to privatize Hydro One.

More than 80% of Ontarians want to see Hydro One remain public. More than 185 municipalities have passed motions to keep Hydro One public. Editorial writers and columnists have urged the government to stop the sale. Now, thanks to the FAO, Ontarians have the facts: Selling Hydro One will mean less money, not more, for infrastructure.

But there is still time for the Premier to do the right thing, and we're here with this motion to try to get them to do exactly that. They have to stop the sell-off of any more of Hydro One.

If this sale will increase Ontario's debt and barely scratch the surface of transit and infrastructure funding, Ontarians need to ask a pretty fundamental question: Why is this deal going forward? Who is it that this deal is helping? From day one, the sale of Hydro One has been about catering to a small group of powerful Liberal friends and insiders. That's what it's all about, Speaker: yet again, the same old behaviour from the same old Liberals in the same old seat of power that is wearing so, so thin in the province of Ontario.

Almost two weeks ago, as the opening bell rang on Bay Street and Hydro One scrolled across the ticker tape for the first time, the Premier wasn't even here in this House to answer questions. She wasn't even here in this province to answer questions. She was on the other side of the world—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thought that you would react to Andrea Horwath calling her "Kathleen Wynne" instead of "the Premier." Secondly, they're not supposed to comment if someone is not in the House for question period or whatever.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is correct when she is not happy with the fact that we don't mention absenteeism. That's true. I would ask the leader of the third party to stick to "the Premier" or "the Wynne government." Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I withdraw, and certainly will.

But the bottom line is that China is quite a distance away from Ontario and, quite literally, as far removed as possible from the impact of the decisions that she has made on the people of Ontario. It was a defining moment for the Premier, Speaker.

But there's still time for the Premier, for the Liberal government and for all those Liberal backbench MPPs to do the right thing: to do the right thing by their constituents; to do the right thing by the people of Ontario; to do what the vast majority of folks want them to do. There is still time for the Premier and the Liberal members to listen to the people of Ontario, to listen to those constituents, to listen to municipal leaders, to listen to the families and businesses who are worried about the damage that this sell-off will do to their ability to make ends meet or stay in business.

I guarantee each and every member of the government caucus that their constituents are going to know how they voted on this motion today. They will know whether or not they voted to sell Hydro One without ever campaigning on it or consulting with the people that they were elected to represent.

I urge every member of this House to think about those people, to think about the fact that those people were never given the opportunity—ever—to have a say on this extremely important issue, Speaker. I urge all members of this House to support the motion to actually do government differently, like they pretended they were going to do during the election campaign, only to get elected and then turn around and do the opposite.

Now you have a chance. Redeem yourself. Do the opposite of the way you're behaving now. Do what you said you were going to do during the campaign, and immediately stop the sale of Hydro One. Listen to the people who elected you. Back off of a wrong decision. Change your mind when you know that the decision you've made is the wrong decision. Show what it means to have true leadership in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This resolution is an open-handed slap in the face to the more than three million people who live in the 905 belt around Metro Toronto. How do we get from midtown Burlington through central Oakville and connect to downtown Mississauga or Brampton or Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Thornhill or Markham? In our neighbourhood, we call it the TTC solution: Take The Car.

This government has spent 12 years adding, upgrading and renewing public transit, and this NDP motion wants us to stop dead in our tracks and leave us stuck in traffic gridlock forever.

Since 2003, our government has more than doubled GO train service, extended hours, added trains and buses, and put in a GO bus repair and storage facility in western Mississauga. That's infrastructure. That's what the Hydro One sale funds are going to continue to build. That's what the NDP wants to stop. That's why this backward-thinking resolution needs to be defeated.

West of Toronto, we need extra capacity on our Milton GO line. We think of it as our line, but it really belongs to CP Rail. We need two more tracks on that line. CP Rail uses the Milton GO line at its full freight capacity for its main business of freight rail. Metrolinx only has one eastbound window of time on one track in the morning and one westbound window of time on the same track in the evening. We need those funds generated by the progressive sale of Hydro One shares to build two new tracks on the Milton GO line so that GO trains that run eastbound in the morning can return westbound throughout the day.

We need those Hydro One funds working for us so that many of the 50,000 more employees that commute into Mississauga than commute out of Mississauga can leave their cars in Toronto and get out to Mississauga by rail instead.

The Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal have both built large new data centres in Meadowvale. They built them close to the Meadowvale GO station to enable their people to use transit. We need that Hydro One money working in Meadowvale to help the people who work in aerospace, financial services, manufacturing, life sciences, information technology and professional services. We need them to spend either more time at home or more time doing productive things at the office, and less time on the highway sitting in traffic. The NDP may not want people from all over the GTA getting to well-paying, high-value jobs in Mississauga, but we in Mississauga want our top talent doing productive work, not sitting uselessly in traffic.

Let's be clear: The NDP not only have no infrastructure plan, let alone any means of funding one; the NDP is consistently opposed to the generation and transmission of electricity by any means at any time. They are opposed to having any private sector concern generate or transmit electricity. They oppose having publicly owned Ontario Power Generation and publicly owned Hydro One generate or transmit electricity, and by this backward-thinking resolution the NDP is telling Ontarians they

want this frustrating, wasteful, expensive, unresponsive status quo to continue forever.

The NDP has never seen an infrastructure project it didn't want to stop dead in its tracks. Using money found in Hydro One will help pay some of the capital costs of getting two new tracks on the Milton GO line from east of the Humber River as far as Meadowvale during phase 1 and beyond in phase 2.

Who among us can't say that Hydro One can do better as an organization, just as people said of CN Rail 20 years ago? The management of Hydro One thinks the company can do better. So does the Auditor General of Ontario. Contractors and developers who deal with Hydro One are emphatic that Hydro One can do much, much better.

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Interestingly, Hydro One's own collective bargaining units share this desire to do better. Both the Power Workers' Union and the Society of Energy Professionals support Hydro One moving from the public sector to the private sector. Investors agree. The shares were all bought, often by retail investors at the high end of the share price. That means that the Ontario Trillium Trust now has more than \$3 billion of cash in the bank from the sale of about 15% of Hydro One.

While we can't know what the future holds for Hydro One, we can say that \$10,000 invested in CN Rail at its own initial public offering 20 years ago is today, despite the doomsday predictions that are very similar to the assertions in this backward resolution made today, worth more than \$400,000.

It's not that investors don't want to own assets such as Hydro One. Just this month, three of Canada's largest pension funds invested US\$2.8 billion to acquire a toll road that links downtown Chicago to its southeastern suburbs. Who were these buyers? The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board; the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System, or OMERS; and the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. They bought a one third stake in Skyway Concession Company. It's only a 12.5 kilometre road. Said Canada Pension Plan Investment Board head of infrastructure, Cressida Hogg: "Skyway represents a rare opportunity for us to invest in a mature and significant toll road of this size in the US."

So why shouldn't Ontarians, through their pension funds or in their own investment portfolios, be able to share in the ownership of their province's own assets? We see no reason why Ontarians shouldn't share in what they already own, and be able to build and buy even more valuable infrastructure, such as the Milton GO line or light rail to link the 905 cities to one another without people being treated like freight, doing hub-and-spoke commutes through Union Station in Toronto.

Why shouldn't a private Hydro One be able to enter new business lines, acquire different businesses, do business outside of Ontario or offer better services to businesses and residences? The Ontario Securities Commission and regulators have teeth. If they can manage the banking system and our largest transportation companies,

give them access to capital and help them grow into world-class competitors, then why not Hydro One?

In Mississauga, we already deal with a private power distribution company in Enersource. Our rates have remained affordable and reasonable. Our gas in Mississauga comes from Enbridge, another private sector entity, and gas prices have fallen.

Just today, the UK announced that by 2025, it will phase out coal. US electrical utilities are moving in the same direction. The price of electricity is driven by the need for utilities everywhere to get back into the infrastructure business to rebuild generation and transmission all over North America and Europe. We in Ontario have already taken the pain that nearly all utilities are only now facing up to. We in Ontario bought tomorrow's generation and transmission assets with yesterday's money at near-zero interest rates. The rest of the world is going to have to scramble to buy today's generation and transmission assets at tomorrow's prices, paying interest rates they have no way of being able to predict.

We do not need the do-nothing status quo policies of the NDP, whose ideas are driven exclusively by punitive, high-tax policies that are guaranteed to drive our wealth creators out of Ontario. Doing nothing is not an option. Taxing our job creators out of the province is not an option. Cutting the heart out of our programs and services is not an option. Slashing and burning is not an option. Finding some—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a little reminder: Your own member is speaking and I've got two ministers yelling at the other members over here, exchanging thoughts. I can't hear him. It would be courteous of you, when your own member is speaking, to maybe listen. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. After all, we were very well behaved during their presentation.

Finding some value in what we own to build more assets that Ontarians will continue to own is an option. The NDP may live in a fantasy world in which they never have to make a decision, never have to figure out how to pay for it, never have to worry about the consequences, never have to worry about neighbours like mine continuing to fume in traffic. We live in the real world. That real world needs real choices. The NDP have actually offered us a real choice. We reject their choice. This motion should not pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to say at the outset that I will be supporting the motion by the leader of the third party. I listened intently to her address. I can't say that I agreed with everything she said in it, because there are some things that I don't, but on the principle of this motion she's absolutely correct.

As to who is living in a fantasy world, I just heard an address from Walt Disney over there, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville. He's definitely living in a

fantasy world because he spent about \$50 billion in his little address when even by their own calculation they're going to get \$4 billion. By the Financial Accountability Officer's calculation, they may only get \$1.4 billion. But he makes it sound like that sale of Hydro One is going to mean every one of those infrastructure projects goes ahead. And somehow, ladies and gentlemen, if they don't sell Hydro One, their magnificent \$130-billion, 10-year plan for infrastructure will just have to be cancelled. You want to talk about living in a fantasy world? And he expects the people out there to think that there's an ounce of credibility in those kinds of statements—an ounce of credibility?

I mean, if they at least put forth some facts and put on the table, "This is an infrastructure project that is estimated to cost this amount of money; this one, this amount of money." And if you added it up—and took their own numbers—to \$4 billion and said, "These are the ones that would be in jeopardy if we didn't proceed with this sale," you know what? At least the people could pass judgment. They could do their own analysis, pass judgment and say okay. But there's still \$126 billion on the table over the next 10 years to build infrastructure. Somehow, without it the whole thing just gets cancelled.

You know, for 140—well, almost 150—years in this province, the government raised funds through taxation and other methods of raising revenue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: How many years?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Almost 150.

That is how they paid for infrastructure. They may have, from time to time, had specific charges. I wasn't around here 150 years ago, but by the way that the member from Mississauga-Streetsville talks, he may have been, because he seems to know it all. There may have been other vehicles that were used to pay for infrastructure. But not once did a government ever say, "We have to sell a provincial asset to pay for infrastructure." Not once did they ever say, "We have to sell a provincial asset to pay for infrastructure." Now, all of a sudden, here we have this government saying, "Without selling Hydro One, we cannot proceed with our plan."

They say they campaigned on it in the last election. Was this some kind of a vision they had? First of all, we don't agree with that. We share the view of the third party that they touched around the edges of the possibility of musing about, "Maybe, someday, we might think of doing this or that," but there was never any direct language—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Then denied it after the election.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then denied it. But there was never any direct language in their campaign promises or their budget about specifically taking Hydro One and selling the shares.

So here we have now a corporation that owns 97% of the transmission in this province. It is a veritable monopoly. I heard the energy minister say today, "Well, the Progressive Conservatives have always been in favour of privatization." You know, he's not entirely incorrect when he says that. But let's put a little bit of truth onto the bone here.

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We've always believed—and in many cases, in most cases, we believe that it's true—that anything that fosters competition will actually bring down prices and be a better deal for consumers. But when you're talking about something that has a 97% monopoly, and that monopoly will still be maintained, there might be more people in the province of Ontario—more likely, more corporations, more hedge funds or whatever—who own shares of that corporation, but the corporation itself will still be the single entity that controls 97% of transmission in the province of Ontario. It's still a monopoly. It does nothing to foster competition or anything to drive better prices for consumers—nothing whatsoever. It's still a monopoly. So it will not change whether the Minister of Energy owns shares, whether the Speaker owns shares or whether some big pension funds own shares. It won't change. So it's not an issue about privatization. It's about taking one of our most important assets that is a monopoly and turning that over to the private sector, and whether or not the people of Ontario would be protected under those circumstances.

The gist of the motion is that the Financial Accountability Officer disagrees with the sale and has shown in his assessment the financial impact of the partial sale of Hydro One. This is a document produced by an officer of the assembly, an officer of the Legislature. In it, he clearly delineates how it is wrong, in his opinion, to sell Hydro One. It is wrong because it will not realize the gains or the profits this government claims that it will, and therefore, they should not proceed with it. That's basically his recommendation. Unfortunately, he cannot bind the government in any way, shape or form. He cannot tell them what to do. He can only tell the people what he believes should or should not be done and what the impact of the government decision is.

His first report really turns out to be as close as you could come to an indictment of government policy—his first report. You've got to give the man credit. He didn't go at this in a shy way and say, "Oh, you know, I just got the job. Maybe I better go easy on these people." He was pretty stark; he was pretty clear that this is a bad deal for the people of the province of Ontario. Then you have to ask yourself: If somebody's willing to make a bad deal, the natural question is—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Why?

Mr. John Yakabuski: —why? Exactly. Why? If someone is really wanting to make a good deal, no one ever asks why, because the why is obvious: because it's a good deal. You'd have to ask them, "Why not?" If somebody wants to make a good deal, the question would be: Why not? But in a question of why someone wants to make a bad deal—through you, Speaker, and I'm sure you would ask the same question. If someone offered you a bad deal, you would say, "Why?"

Well, then comes the answer, and the Financial Accountability Officer really answered that question. The government is in such a mess—the words of the President of the Treasury Board herself and my colleague the

finance critic, the member for Nipissing, have made it very clear. She is on the public record as saying that we're out of money. We're broke; we've got no money. So what are you going to do when you're broke? If you've got no cash but you have assets, if you're really desperate, you might decide to sell those assets. But if the buyers out there know you're broke—and you didn't try to hide the fact that you're broke; you told the world you're broke, so the world knows you're broke—they know you're out there looking for some cash. If somebody knows you need the money, do you think they're going to offer you the best deal for what you're trying to sell, or are they going to try to get a good deal?

Well, we saw by the rush to buy shares that the people believe it's a good deal. The shares for them is a good deal. So if the people buying the shares is a good deal, then the people selling the shares is probably not a good deal. And who are the people selling the shares? Well, it's not the government of Ontario. They're the agent of doom, but the people who end up selling the shares are the people of Ontario, who are going to be the losers. They are the ones who are going to be the losers. The government is selling your property at a fire sale price.

Are the people happy about it? Well, 80% of them have made it pretty clear that they're not happy about it. Almost 200 municipalities have made it clear that they are not happy about it. But what will it take? Because, you see, the Financial Accountability Officer also made it abundantly clear that these guys have a big fiscal hole in their budget projections, a big fiscal hole. It's like going to Tim Hortons and you've got that big doughnut and you're wondering, how are you going to try to fill it? Well, this one is so big you can't even get a box of Timbits to fill it because it's too much. It's \$3.5 billion, \$3.5 billion of fiscal hole.

So what are they going to do? They're going to have to generate some quick cash. How are they going to do it? They are going to take the crown jewel of the electricity system and sell it off. It is wrong. Like the Financial Accountability Officer said, they're going to make a gain here. It's going to look good for the first couple of years, because that's going to be the process of selling that 60%, pulling in that cash, shoving it into the sack and saying, "Look at us." The only thing they want to be able to do—they don't care about the pain and how wrong it is down the road; they want, by hook or by crook, to be able to say to the people in 2018 when they are out campaigning, "See? See? We told you we could balance the budget." Oh, but the tangled web they have weaved in order to get there, if this proceeds, Minister.

You know, I don't have the time because I have other colleagues who want to speak to this, but I could go into quotations from various ministers on that side of the House. But just because he is the Minister of Energy, I have to point out that when the Minister of Energy was the mayor of Ottawa, he was adamantly opposed to anyone who would consider selling the crown jewel of our electricity system, Hydro One. All of a sudden now, when he's the Minister of Energy—I'm not sure he

believes in it now, but I know he takes his orders from the corner office down the hall, just like Jason Malinowski there in the under press. He's a very capable young man, but I know he takes his orders from the Premier's office.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's Lucas.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Lucas. Sorry. Lucas Malinowski. There's a Jason Malinowski who is a doctor in Barry's Bay. I got confused for a second, Dr. Qaadri. Thank you very much. Lucas Malinowski: Let me correct that. He gets his orders from the corner office as well.

Speaker, this is the wrong decision by this government. They still have time to halt the process. We're being inundated with petitions from all across Ontario to say, "Stop the sale of Hydro One," and "Hydro One not for sale." Now is the time that the rubber has to meet the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to start off my brief comments by pointing out that this motion is essentially here on the floor of this Legislature at the request of the people of this province, and it is truly—you do have the opportunity to stop this. Members of the Liberal majority government, from the backbenches to the front benches across, you can take this back to your next cabinet caucus meeting and you can urge the government to do the right thing, and that is sincerely what we are hoping you do.

We now have a growing amount of evidence that proves that the privatization of Hydro One is definitely not in the best interests of the people of this province, and we also have a very warped and a growing disillusionment out there that this government actually understands how bad this deal is for the people of this province. Our leader has called this a false choice: to have infrastructure in the province of Ontario or to sell off Hydro One. No other leader in any other province has ever put that to the people. In fact, this Premier has also never put that question to the people of this province because, if she had, they would not be sitting in a majority state.

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I want to follow the money because I think the money tells a very important story on this journey that we're going on, that no one ever expected to—is that this government says they need to sell Hydro One for infrastructure. But when you go back through two successive budgets—in the 2013-14 budget this government failed to spend \$1.173 billion on transportation capital appropriations. They failed to spend the money that they had already put in their budget. In 2014-15 they failed to spend \$335 million that they had allocated already to transportation. So you can understand why there is such a serious trust issue with this government when they say, "We have to sell Hydro One to give you infrastructure," when they didn't even spend the money that was in the budgets that they had already allocated. It is nonsensical, Mr. Speaker.

We just received another Budget Measures Act, which also did not use the opportunity to close and tighten up

the language on where the expenditures from Hydro One will go. This government tells the people of this province that this funding is going to infrastructure and transit, the Trillium Trust. The language is not clear, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the wiggle room for where that money could go, you could drive a Mack truck through it. That is very concerning for us, as well, because it questions the entire premise of this sale.

The false choice is there, but the opportunity to do the right thing is why we have brought this motion to the floor of this Legislature. Our energy critic said during estimates—and challenged the deputy minister—that an estimated \$2.2 billion in Hydro One proceeds to be dedicated to the Trillium Trust is a noncash gain that cannot actually be spent.

This leads me to quote the Financial Accountability Officer, who said, in our briefing, "This is a matter of simple math. If you sell profit-generating revenue to the private sector, you lose that money." It's true that it will get us to 2017-18, looking okay; although I must tell you that the mid-term fiscal outlook that the Financial Accountability Officer also, of his own initiative, brought forward indicates that this government has greatly exaggerated the revenue that's going to come into Queen's Park, which means that there will be further and devastating cuts.

You have the financial reality of this province, which this government has overseen for the last 12—now into 13—years, still blaming other governments for that work. Mr. Speaker, I must tell you, the Liberals are selling something; we are not buying it and nor are the people of this province. We will continue to hold them to account, but I urge them to do the right thing today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's my pleasure to be able to speak, as well. Right off the bat, I will be supporting this NDP motion, as well.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the tepid response.

Interjection: We'll get better as you go along.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Okay.

Speaker, I'm going to do three things. First, I'm going to set the stage about the finances of Ontario, then I'm going to talk about the Financial Accountability Officer and then I'm going to really talk about where this money is going and the motivation behind this sale.

First of all, as this Legislature knows full well and as my colleague mentioned, the Deputy Premier told us loudly and clearly on W5 a couple of weeks ago that we're out of money. We can talk about why, Speaker. There's the bills to pay the secret deal for the MaRS bailout—although the MaRS institution itself is very valuable, the building it's in—bailing out a US realtor, \$410 million approximately. Somebody has to pay the piper. There's the \$1.1 billion spent to cancel two gas plants; we know that the bill is due and we have to pay the piper. The smart meters: They told us it was a billion;

it's \$2 billion. There's Ornge air ambulance: almost another billion there.

In 30 seconds, I've mentioned \$4 billion of scandals; so we know the why. What's the result of it? Of course, we all know Moody's has given us two credit downgrades. One recent analysis suggests that that costs us an extra \$430 million a year in interest. The Conference Board of Canada told us loudly and clearly as well this province can't meet its pledge to balance the books. The Auditor General told us in her last report that debt continues to grow faster than the province's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in their appropriately titled report on our economy, *How Bad Is It?*—that's the title—they used words such as "crisis" and "dire." That's what's sprinkled throughout their report. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us that 97% of businesses in Ontario are concerned about our economy.

Speaker, we've set the financial stage here, and now we know what the government has done: They've decided to have a fire sale of assets. They started a year ago, when—they had borrowed money to buy the General Motors shares. Last year, they sold the shares for \$1.1 billion, and instead of doing the prudent thing and paying the money back to where they borrowed it from, they just plunked that right into operating costs. We know that now. This year, they've decided to have a fire sale of our valuable asset of Hydro One, and that money now ostensibly will simply go to pay the debt and deficit.

The government continues to tell us that this money is going into infrastructure. I'm going to read you a quote from the *Ottawa Citizen*, because it really does sum up what this shell game is all about:

"A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset ... just to keep doing what we have been doing for years.

"The real answer, I suspect, is that putting some billions of new money into the province's transit trust will enable the government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay for other spending."

You can't put it better than that. To prove out that point, back in the 2014 budget, when they announced the \$130-billion infrastructure expenditure, it did not need the sale of Hydro One. But the next year's budget, the 2015 budget, repeated exactly the same lines as the 2014 budget, the same \$130 billion, but they now say it needs the Hydro sale to make this possible. But their own documents tell us they did not need the Hydro sale to make this. We know that they've over-promised and under-delivered on almost everything they've done. In the four short years that I've been here, I've seen it, and certainly in my two terms as mayor of the city of North Bay I saw the same thing: over-promise and under-deliver.

The Financial Accountability Officer took it upon himself—in fact, his words were that he took it on his own initiative to prepare the report, the financial assessment of the sale. This is a quote from the briefing that we

held with him. This is the Financial Accountability Officer's quote: "The province's fiscal position deteriorates because of loss of income generated by the sale." So you know that this is going to hurt us in the long term. It's going to hurt our financial picture.

He also told us that this is really a financing decision: Do you borrow or do you sell an asset? That's what this is all about. It's not about transit. Do you borrow or do you sell an asset? I would go a little further and suggest: Or do you simply start managing your finances properly and stop the scandalous spending? That I would have added, but he's a little more gentle than I am.

Again, we've seen the GM shares. That was how they burned the furniture to heat the house last year. This year, they're going to sell Hydro, a one-time sale. The Financial Accountability Officer told us that we could bring in as little as \$1.4 billion. Never mind the number that the finance minister threw around today, including the \$2 billion from a non-cash asset. That money has to come from somewhere. I would prefer to listen to the Financial Accountability Officer far above and beyond anybody on that side of the House. So we could get as low as \$1.4 billion net. We're going to give up \$700 million in revenue a year? What he said is that, basically, this has a long-term negative impact on the province. You're going to juice up the books for two years. You're going to look great. But in year 3, you've got no money: (a) no money coming in, and (b) the \$1.4 billion is already gone.

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You can do that as long as you've got assets to sell. Again, last year it was the General Motors shares: \$1.1 billion. This year it's Hydro: \$1.4 billion. We learned only a few minutes ago, Speaker, when the minister presented his Budget Measures Act, that here's what they are selling next: the OPG headquarters real estate, the LCBO headquarters real estate and OPG's Lakeview Generating Station property. They're telling us now that this is what they plan on selling in the future to pay their bills.

Pretty soon, we're going to run out of assets to sell. This is absolutely no way—you're not fixing the problem. The problem is the overspending. So you're not addressing the core problem. Remember, Speaker, that this is the same group that's selling Hydro that only a few months ago sold Ontera, the telecommunications division of Ontario Northland, for \$6 million. First of all, they spent, as we disclosed, \$6.5 million on consultants and lawyers, and got \$6 million for an asset. It took the Auditor General to tell us, "Oh, by the way, the asset was worth more than that." You lost \$61 million. Talk about giving away the farm: They lost \$61 million. We're going to let these guys handle this multi-billion dollar asset when they can't even transact something as small as that and, sadly, as precious as that, because it's gone too—all the ongoing revenue from that asset. They lost \$60,937,000. Can you imagine that? They knew they were losing that, and they went into it.

The FAO—the Financial Accountability Officer—also told us that the initial 15% sale of Hydro would

significantly reduce the province's deficit in 2015-16. He has told us. This has nothing to do with transit. That money was already in the budget. Yes, they may put it into transit but may take the money that was in transit out at the bottom. It's a shell game, and the Financial Accountability Officer laid it bare. He told us that it will go to reduce the deficit, and he has also told us that in the years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.

That's how desperate they are for cash, Speaker. They know that this is a bad deal and yet they're going to go ahead. We saw them shed 15%; they're going to go ahead and shed the remainder of this asset. This is how absolutely mind-bogglingly ridiculous this sale is. They know from families, they know from members of provincial Parliament who have been speaking here and now they know from the Financial Accountability Officer that the long-term negative impact on this province is about to happen.

Speaker, I fully support this motion. I know that our party fully supports this motion. We are terribly disturbed at the lack of financial accountability that this government has brought. I'm looking forward to the remainder of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's quite an experience listening to the Liberals talk about the sale of Hydro One. It's comparable to being in a room full of smog. In fact, this morning, when I was listening to the Minister of Finance, it was so smoggy in here, the staff had to open a window so we wouldn't choke to death, because I have to tell you, Speaker, that when they talk, suddenly all numbers and shapes start to get vague. It's very hard to tell what's real. You're fumbling around.

I want to talk about the Minister of Finance in his response this morning to Andrea Horwath—her question about what sort of money we were actually going to get from this sale. He said that today the NDP are going to make a motion and this is what they're going to say: that the new cash from the sale will raise as little as \$1.4 billion over the course of the next four years. That's what they're claiming. Speaker, as you're well aware, the Legislature's independent Financial Accountability Officer calculated that the real amount of money available for transit would be at the low end: around \$1.4 billion. It wasn't a number anyone on this side of the aisle made up. It wasn't a number made up by someone who is peddling snake oil out on College Street. It was made up by the Financial Accountability Officer, someone who works with numbers.

The minister went on to say—and I'll grant he is totally audacious when it comes to numbers; nothing holds him back—that the fact of the matter is, this one transaction alone has netted for the families of Ontario \$3 billion; \$1 billion extra, which is going to pay down the debt. So we're paying down debt by a billion; we're

putting \$3 billion more into infrastructure. Holy mackerel, that's a big one. That's a big one.

Speaker, it is a matter of public record that the amount raised from the initial sale of stocks for Hydro One was \$1.83 billion. Now, these two figures don't match. They just don't. We've heard of the miracle of loaves and fishes. This is not that. We've got \$1.83 billion; the minister is saying we're generating \$3 billion. How do you do that? How do you do that?

Others will speculate—I'm sure fruitfully—about why the minister is saying that. All I know for certain is that you don't get \$3 billion from a sale that has only netted you \$1.83 billion. The numbers are not there.

But he didn't end there. He went on. They further say that we're now going to have forgone revenue. Absolutely. We're going to replace it with greater revenue. That's the whole point of reinvestment, something that party doesn't seem to understand. I don't know what's the matter with me: "Why don't you understand the minister?" It's a failing.

Minister, if you were listening to me closely, you'd know the numbers that actually show the source of that greater revenue are locked in documents you wouldn't make public, that you wouldn't give to the Financial Accountability Officer. If you've got those documents showing this great return on investment, release them. Release them.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let them be free.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Let them be free. Unlock the documents, not Hydro One.

Speaker, I talked to reporters who said to me, "Look, the Liberals say they have these documents showing there's this huge return on the investment, bringing in far more money than we're getting from Hydro One." You know, if I had documents like that, I'd release them. I'd let people know what I had. I wouldn't say to the Financial Accountability Officer, "I'm sorry. Sure you're appointed to look after the people of Ontario's interest, sure you're supposed to give an objective assessment, but really I can't give it to you. It's hidden. It's over here. It's under a thick pall of smog that you aren't going to get at."

The Roman historian Tacitus said that audacity is the last refuge of a scoundrel, and I will say that the Minister of Finance is certainly audacious when it comes to these numbers.

The Liberal Party has a chance to back off this misguided, reckless, dangerous course of action. They should take the chance; they should take it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the NDP motion this afternoon. The motion presented here today by the third party is a reiteration of what our party and I, as PC critic for Hydro One, have been saying for weeks on end now: The fire sale of Hydro One is a decision made by this government that is nothing more than a quick cash grab. That's all it is. By not giving due consideration to the ramifications and implications this

sell-off will have on the province, this government is gambling with Ontario's financial future and leaving a lot of Ontarians in a very precarious position. Furthermore, this government has been ignoring the calls not only of the two parties across the floor from them, but the impartial advice, which has been mentioned many times here today, of the non-partisan Financial Accountability Officer, Mr. LeClair.

Close to 200 municipal councils from across the province have also formed a united front against this sale and, most importantly, thousands of voices from across Ontario have been incessantly demanding an end to this fire sale in Ontario.

For over a hundred years, the electricity system has been owned by the public and for the public, not for the few who were able to buy the shares a couple of weeks ago. As a publicly owned company, Hydro One was owned by those who knew its customers best. That would be the people of Ontario, not a few selected investors.

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There's no choice in the electricity network that you can use. People don't have a choice as to whether or not they'll turn on their heat or flick on their lights. They have to do these things. It's a need here in Ontario. It's a basic necessity of life. Yet, by privatizing this utility, the province is allowing the control to slip from public hands into the laps of a select number of private companies and a few shareholders.

Putting a company that services electricity to people across the province in the hands of private firms only invites them to hike rates in order to increase their own bottom line. That's exactly what's happening right now. Not two weeks after the first 15% of Hydro One was sold off, the company is already looking to introduce another increase in their distribution fees, starting on New Year's Day, January 1, 2016. These costs are becoming unbearable for ratepayers in Ontario.

Last week I had the pleasure to visit Duane up at the Red Steer Butcher Shop. It's run by Mr. Wingett and his wife, and it's just on the south end of Bancroft, in the village of L'Amable. As the proud owner of that butcher shop—this has become a local institution in the community. Everybody who goes to cottage country in North Hastings always stops into the Red Steer Butcher Shop to grab a nice rib-eye or a sirloin or some sausages to throw on the barbecue when they arrive at their cottage.

Well, because of the rising cost of electricity, which is seriously out of control in Ontario, Duane is now selling his business, and it's the hydro rates that are forcing the "for sale" sign to be placed on the front lawn of that business. As an example, Duane's bills from January to August this year, in comparison to the same time period last year, are \$3,500 more. That's in spite of the fact that he's using less energy this year than he did last year. Comparing the one month of August alone, from 2014 to 2015, Duane was paying 20% more on his hydro bill even though his coolers were sitting empty. He shut off his biggest cooler so that he can save on energy. He

doesn't heat or cool the building anymore. If it's a hot day, it's hot in there. If it's a cool day, it's rather chilly in the Red Steer Butcher Shop.

Having a chance to visit the Ivanhoe Cheese factory in Madoc earlier that day as well, I was informed that the factory was seeing hydro bills that have increased by \$30,000 over the past year—a significant increase for a pretty significant employer in the Centre Hastings region in my riding. They employ well over 100 people, one of the largest employers if not the largest employer in the Centre Hastings region, and put out a good product, I would say as well, at the Ivanhoe Cheese factory. Stop in and grab some squeaky curds if you get the chance, Mr. Speaker.

To top it all off, this week, the Belleville Public Library, a community hub in my riding—well, for over a century, the Belleville Public Library has paid the lowest electricity prices in North America. They're now seeing hydro costs eating into the budget at the Belleville Public Library at an unmanageable rate, threatening the future of the library itself. They had to beg Belleville city council, during budget deliberations this week, to help them out.

When is this all going to end? It's affecting businesses—medium, small and large businesses across the province. It's affecting our libraries. It's affecting our hockey rinks and community centres, our hospitals, our schools. The electricity prices are unmanageable for many of our public institutions, not just our business community and our residential customers. When are these buildings going to have to close as a result of this? Or when will the large businesses realize that it's more profitable for them to do business in Quebec or the United States, where the electricity rates and prices are much lower? It's already started to happen. I know it's been mentioned by a couple of members here this afternoon that businesses are leaving Ontario for lower-cost jurisdictions when it comes to electricity.

This government has chosen to ignore the voices of Ontarians, but it has also chosen to ignore the independent officer that they tasked to consider the financial implications of decisions that they make, such as the Hydro One sale. The Financial Accountability Officer has thrown cold water on the fire sale of this valuable crown asset, and he repeatedly pointed out in his report that this sale will only make the province's budget worse off and that it will increase the net debt of the province.

Ignoring the advice of an independent, impartial and well-respected economist will not magically change the province's books or the budget in the long term. It'll be the people of Ontario who pay for the decision of having the voice of Mr. Ed Clark and his friends whisper into the ear of the Premier. It's the unelected man behind the curtain who is puppeteering policy with our provincial government.

No matter which way the government tries to spin the FAO's report, section after section proved that the government is jeopardizing the financial security of this province by selling Hydro One. That message was received loud and clear by everyone except for our government, except for the government of Ontario.

In order to quickly fill the coffers, the government is ignoring the revenue that Hydro One currently contributes to the province. Every year, Hydro One is bringing in \$750 million in proceeds. If the government had instead chosen to dedicate these annual proceeds toward infrastructure, the province could have seen sustained infrastructure investments far beyond the next 10 years and financial proceeds that would far exceed the quick cash that they're hoping to raise now.

That's what it all comes down to. These guys are broke. Everybody out there knows it. They need a quick fix. The only way that they can get it is to start selling off public assets, assets that are returning revenue to the province of Ontario, year after year.

It's Hydro One now. There was just a press conference downstairs and a briefing. I wasn't able to get it because I was busy in the estimates committee, but from what we understand, there are some other assets that are going to be sold off. That was announced by the Minister of Finance here today. I'm not exactly sure what they are yet, but I know the list of public assets being sold off is growing in Ontario, and this is all without public approval or public consultation.

Page after page in the Financial Accountability Officer's report has negated the potential financial benefits of this sale, but the government continues to bulldoze through, without a second thought to the long-term consequences to the province.

As I stated this morning during question period, when the chair of Hydro-Québec's board, Michael Penner, was asked about privatization of their public utility, he stated in the *Globe and Mail*, "Don't even think about Hydro-Québec and privatization in the same sentence." Then he went on to say that there's a better chance of the Egyptians privatizing the pyramids than Hydro-Québec being privatized. That's the chair of the board of Hydro-Québec, who realizes the absurdity of privatizing a provincial asset, one that is returning revenue that you can count on, year after year, to the province. Instead, this government has decided to sell off the only electricity grid that we have. If Quebec realizes this, why can't Ontario realize this? But they just don't get it.

With a new \$4-million CEO leading Hydro One, we're seeing further waste of public funds. The previous Hydro One CEO earned a quarter of what the new CEO is making. But to top it all off, the previous CEO, Mr. Marcello, who couldn't get the job done at Hydro One, remains on the payroll of the company. For a whopping half a million dollars a year, he remains on as an adviser. Countless other provincially run systems—their CEOs, their presidents—electricity grids across the country are all being run more reliably and efficiently than Ontario's, with less expensive CEOs at the helm.

Given that the government has already sold the first 15% of Hydro One, we must stop this government from any future sell-offs of Hydro One. The remaining shares still belong to the people of Ontario, and we must protect this asset from slipping into private hands for the future of the province and the future of all Ontarians.

So when it comes to today's opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the third party, it comes down—it's a rather lengthy motion, actually. But, really, it comes down to the first sentence and the last sentence for me. The first sentence—"Whereas Ontario's Financial Accountability Office has reported that 'with the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale'"—is significant. The last sentence: "Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the government shall immediately stop the sale of any more shares in Hydro One."

I agree 100% with this motion and will stand up with the third party, as a member of the official opposition, and support their opposition day motion today.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this particular motion this afternoon. I know it's a motion that's coming from the leader of the third party, of the NDP, and I will—I commit, I promise—spend most of my time focused on not just the content of the motion, of course, but also some of what flowed out of not only the leader of the third party but also members of her caucus in support of this motion.

But I think I have to start, Speaker, having now had the chance to listen to three members of the Ontario PC caucus speak regarding this motion—I just want to begin by saying that I find it remarkable. I know that there are very few on that side, in the Conservative caucus, who have served in this House prior to 2003, although I believe that there are some, and I find it remarkable that this afternoon—not just this afternoon, actually, but on a daily basis, whether it's the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke or their leader, who represents one of the Simcoe ridings, or the member from Prince Edward-Hastings who just spoke a second ago. It's as if they have collectively surrendered to that—I always use the word "convenient" to describe this. Normally it's "convenient mythology" to describe the NDP; today it's "convenient amnesia" on the part of the Conservative caucus, because of course, just a second ago the member from Prince Edward stood up and talked about the importance of ensuring that a government keeps in the public domain assets that return some form of revenue back to the government.

Highway 407 ETR doesn't just run through a part of the GTHA; it actually runs through essentially the middle of my riding. I remember working here as a staff person to one of my predecessors in 1998, when the Conservative government of Mike Harris, in a mad dash to try and balance the province's books before they were going back to the people in 1999, decided to sell the 407 ETR to a foreign interest, to a non-Canadian interest, for somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3 billion to \$4 billion. It is estimated today that that asset is worth in the neighbourhood of \$11 billion.

I'm fond of saying in the back-and-forth, the cut and thrust of this House, that from the Conservative

standpoint, the sale of 407 ETR is the gift that keeps on taking. So to hear that member and members of that caucus try to lecture us on this side of the House—I think also, in almost every municipality that I've had the chance to either visit or hear from at AMO conferences and ROMA/Good Roads conferences, I've heard repeatedly from municipalities that still have to grapple with the challenge of a significant number of roads being downloaded to them by that particular government when they were last in power.

As someone who has lived his entire life in the GTHA—again, this is how I'll wrap up talking about the Conservatives—I find it exceedingly remarkable that those members on that side of the House would stand and lecture this government, and suggest that they could lecture our government, when it comes to public transit in the GTHA. When they were last in power, they didn't just stop or slow down a subway project in the city of Toronto that would have run along Eglinton; they actually stopped the subway construction and then chose to use concrete and other materials to fill in the tunnels that had been tunnelled at that point in time.

So again, I just gave three examples of exactly how far off-course the Conservatives went as it relates to infrastructure investments—just three examples, and of course there are many more.

I did promise that I would come back and talk with I guess a more direct connection to what we've heard from the leader of the NDP and from others in that caucus this afternoon with respect to this motion. I was just saying to my colleague from Barrie that I'm just old enough, I suppose, to remember a time when my older siblings—in fact, I did as well; I'm not going to lie. It wasn't just my older siblings; I did as well, when I had the chance to listen to my old 45s and my LPs on a turntable as a youngster growing up in Ontario—just old enough to remember those days. Listening to the leader of the NDP and virtually every single person who's spoken here this afternoon or has asked questions on a daily basis about this topic, it reminds me of those occasions when those 45s, those LPs, would kind of skip, especially on the B side—difficult to listen to, something you want to stand up and change as quickly as you possibly can.

I say it every single time: This kind of motion or this kind of presentation comes from the third party, from the Ontario NDP—because as I look at all of them, with all of whom I try to have a constructive relationship, it is remarkable to me that on a regular basis, including today in this House in response to my ministerial statement discussing our province's re-establishment of Connecting Links, discussing our gas tax funding, which has gone up by \$11 million this year versus last year—even today, members of that caucus, the member from Parkdale—High Park, the leader herself and others from that caucus have stood up and said, "Why don't you invest more in the crucial infrastructure that we need in this province?"

Before, as I was listening to the leader speak, in particular, and the member from Kitchener, I drew up a list of about a dozen and a half or more—and that's just

sort of a cursory list of projects that will either directly or indirectly support your communities. I don't fault you. I don't fault you in the NDP for being strong ambassadors for your communities, but my goodness, whether it's the member from Niagara Falls, my critic, who stands up periodically and champions for his community and asks for the extension of GO rail service, whether it's any of the northern members over there who talk, as our members on this side of the House do from the North, about the importance of making sure we complete the four-laning of Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Muskoka, that we continue to bring upgrades to the TransCanada Highway, that we continue to do that kind of work to support a quality of life and an economy in the North—of course, I see members over there, like the Speaker himself, from the wonderful community of Hamilton. I've never said this on the record, but I'm actually a Ticats fan, and I have a great deal of affection and affinity for that particular community. I say, Speaker, that I see members from Hamilton, including of course the leader of that party, not that many months ago, bringing forward a revolutionary, transformative plan for the beautiful community of Hamilton, so ably and expertly represented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who himself is a great champion, to announce that we would be building an LRT in that community and, just as importantly, extending GO service to a new GO station that will be built in Stoney Creek because we recognize the importance of making sure that we provide multiple options.

I look and see members from London on that side of the House. Just last Friday, the Deputy Premier, President of the Treasury Board—and, by the way, to the leader of the NDP, it's President of the Treasury Board, not Chair of the Management Board. Just last Friday, we announced that we were officially opening the Wonderland interchange in London. In addition, of course, in December of last year, I was with the President of the Treasury Board, our Deputy Premier, to announce that we were launching the environmental assessment for the high-speed rail project, and just a couple of weeks ago, our government announced that we were appointing a special adviser in David Collenette, a former federal transport minister, to report to myself and the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, to look at various ways that we can continue to work on that important project, to unlock the economic potential from the Toronto to Windsor corridor—and yes, I mention Windsor—including stops in London and Kitchener-Waterloo.

This list continues. In the GTHA alone, that Eglinton subway that the Conservatives filled in and cancelled many years ago has now been brought back to life essentially because we are currently building and will deliver higher-order transit, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, a 19-kilometre, 25-stop higher-order transit right through the middle of Toronto. It's under construction currently. We've recently awarded the contract to Crosslink Transit Solutions for \$9.1 billion over the life of that contract, \$2 billion less than was originally estimated.

I know that people in this House have heard me talk about all of these projects: the Right Honourable Herb Gray Parkway in the beautiful community of Windsor, and knowing that the member for Essex in the past has stood in this House and talked to me about our plans and proposals to expand or extend or enhance what's known as the Bruce Crozier Highway as well. Of course, Mr. Crozier was a dear friend and former Liberal MPP in this House.

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This list goes on. I mean, I can keep reading the entire list. It wouldn't be one of my speaking opportunities if I didn't stress the importance of making sure that we do deliver GO regional express rail, two-way, all-day service, not just across all seven of our corridors, but in particular, as it relates to the NDP, two-way, all-day GO service to Kitchener-Waterloo. What the members opposite—in particular, the member from Kitchener in the NDP caucus likes to stand up and pretend that we said that we would deliver GO regional express rail and it would take place in the beat of a heart; it would be done at the flick of a switch. Of course, the commitment was over a decade. That is a commitment that we continue to work on.

On the Kitchener corridor itself, just a few weeks ago, I was in the wonderful community of Brampton, where I announced that we would be adding 14 additional midday off-peak trains from Mount Pleasant station to Union Station and back again. That is a very clear and tangible manifestation of our plan to enhance all seven GO corridors.

Actually, while I'm talking about Peel region, I want to pay a compliment to the deputy leader of the NDP. In fairly difficult circumstances in his community of Brampton, as we brought forward the plan to build the Hurontario-Main LRT, I actually do give credit to the NDP member from Brampton, the deputy leader of their caucus, who went out publicly in support of our plan. That's a man who understands the importance of making the right decision. It's unfortunate that he's been unable to convince his own leader and the rest of his colleagues about the wisdom of the transit infrastructure investments that we're making.

Now, on the motion, itself—

Applause.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely. Give the deputy leader a round of applause. He deserves it.

I will also say, I listened to the leader of the NDP talk today, as she does frequently, as she's done virtually for as long as I've been in this House—the last two or three years—about how she would theoretically pay for all of this infrastructure. And I heard the same old stuff. Our corporate tax rate is lower than she would like it to be. I also heard about what I will call the fictional tax loopholes that she alleges would generate gazillions of dollars on an hourly basis for the Ontario treasury.

I disagree fundamentally with the thrust of both claims, but even if she were right and even if a simple

measure could generate revenue from both of the changes that she talks about, we are talking about—perhaps, maybe, not taking into account any tax leakage, which will occur from time to time—something in the order of magnitude of hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

Our infrastructure plan, which is the most ambitious infrastructure plan in Ontario history, is \$130 billion a year. There is no chance, whether we're talking about her suggestions or the finance critic from the opposition's fiction on finance, that their plan would ever pay for even a fraction of the projects that I've talked about. So I guess here is my question for the leader of the NDP—and oh, by the way, as I mentioned today in my ministerial statement, the money that we're investing in infrastructure across the province of Ontario will help create or sustain 110,000 jobs, primarily in the skilled trades across the province of Ontario. Speaker, I know you're a member who represents Hamilton and I know how proud a tradition there is in Hamilton for those women and men who work in our skilled trades. I understand that clearly in communities right across this province of Ontario—110,000 skilled tradespeople, 110,000 families who will derive support from the infrastructure investments.

I guess, given that it's abundantly clear that there is nothing but fantasy and fiction wrapped up in the leader of the NDP's plan to pay for infrastructure, meaning it's a make-believe plan which the people of Ontario saw completely through in June 2014, here is the question I have: Which of these projects would you not build? Which of these communities would you deprive of infrastructure? Which of the 110,000 families in the province of Ontario would you say—the skilled tradesperson who resides in your house—which of those families would be denied the opportunity to enjoy their share of Ontario's dream and the vision that we have?

I don't understand it. I have a hard time believing that the leader of the NDP would deprive her own community of Hamilton. Perhaps, as she's fond of occasionally doing, she can swivel around in her chair and tell which one of her colleagues in all the other rows—is it the member from Niagara? Is it the members from Hamilton, perhaps? Is it the members from London? How about the member from Durham? Highway 407 East going through Durham all the way to the 35/115: construction underway. Does the member from Durham region on that side—I want to know, who would the leader of the NDP deny in her own caucus when it comes to the plan that we have for the province of Ontario?

The answer, Speaker, is that her numbers don't add up, her philosophy doesn't add up—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

You're done? All right. A couple of members in the third party were quite vocal there. I hope they can cut it back a bit.

Further debate? Second call: Further debate? Third call.

Seeing no one, Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1736 to 1746.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 4. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France
Campbell, Sarah	Hatfield, Percy
DiNovo, Cheri	Horwath, Andrea
Fedeli, Victor	Jones, Sylvia
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Naqvi, Yasir
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Oraziotti, David
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Polts, Arthur
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Qaadir, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 24; the nays are 54.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This afternoon's business being complete, this House is adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1749.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergeant d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest—Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
LaLonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering—Scarborough East / Pickering—Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LJB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
		Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
		President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
		Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Orlitzki, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadir, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
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Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
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Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
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Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
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Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
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Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
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Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
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Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
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Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment / Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
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Government
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Thursday 19 November 2015

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 19 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mr. Hoskins moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister Hoskins.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Ottawa South.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the second reading of the Health Information Protection Act, 2015, which includes amendments to existing legislation that protects the personal health information of Ontarians. This action, which follows up on a commitment that I made in June, aims to create stronger and more comprehensive protection of health information privacy; a renewed provincial eHealth privacy framework; greater accountability and transparency in the health care system about privacy breaches; as well as improved patient care and patient safety. It's one more way that our government is putting patients first.

Together, these legislative amendments would require and reinforce Ontario's position as a leader in the protection of health information privacy. These legislative amendments are needed to ensure that the personal health information of patients receives the highest form of privacy protection.

These amendments would also update our health information privacy rules into the 21st century, where health records are now electronic and not locked away so easily, in a filing cabinet, as they once were.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, our bill would increase accountability and transparency by making it mandatory for health care providers to report certain privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and to relevant regulatory colleges under certain circumstances.

Patients across Ontario deserve to know that their personal health information is being protected. My expectation for all health providers who hold personal information about their patients is that they will go above and beyond to ensure that patients' privacy is being respected. By mandating that certain privacy breaches be reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to regulatory colleges, the individual health care provider, and indeed the whole system, will be able to benefit from the IPC's review and recommendations for avoiding future breaches.

As for the prosecution of PHIPA offences, we are removing a serious barrier to such prosecutions. Currently, there is a six-month limitation period from when a breach is alleged to have occurred to when a prosecution must commence. This has often left very little time to conduct a proper investigation. We are proposing an amendment that, if passed, will remove that six-month limitation period, which will give us more time to investigate the circumstances surrounding privacy breaches that could lead to successful prosecutions.

In addition, we intend to align PHIPA with other provincial offence statutes to require the Attorney General's consent to the commencement of a PHIPA prosecution rather than requiring the Attorney General to actually start the prosecution herself. To further reduce the occurrence of privacy offences in the first place, we propose to double the maximum fines for PHIPA convictions from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for organizations.

We're also proposing to reintroduce privacy protection for electronic health records, as first proposed in 2013—changes that were and are supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Finally, the proposed amendments, if passed, would enable appropriate sharing of patients' drug prescriptions by the ministry with health care providers to protect patient safety and support more informed care decisions. Keeping this province at the forefront of patient privacy protection is understandably what Ontarians expect and deserve.

The second important piece to our legislation is that we're proposing to replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004, with a new act of the same name.

One side of this legislation is protecting the patients' right to privacy, as I've just outlined. The flip side is ensuring transparency within the health care system itself, because information should be appropriately shared with the people who matter most: the patients. It's important that health care providers are able to review information for quality improvement purposes following a critical incident, but this should be done in a manner that also respects the rights of patients and their families to know about critical incidents in hospitals and other health care settings.

The existing Quality of Care Information Protection Act, or QCIPA, was enacted to provide health care workers an opportunity to share information candidly regarding a critical incident and to promote continuous quality improvement. The act ensures that opinions, speculation and information specifically prepared for discussions about quality improvement, which may include information from investigating critical incidents—that that information and those preparations are protected from disclosure in legal proceedings and from most other disclosures.

0910

Unfortunately, however, there was confusion as to what must be disclosed to the patient following a critical incident review, and when and how providers should apply to QCIPA in such circumstances. There was a lack of clarity among some health care organizations about how to use QCIPA effectively, as well as a greater need to share experiences and lessons learned about quality improvement opportunities across organizations across this province.

To better understand the concerns about QCIPA, I convened a QCIPA Review Committee and committed to implement all of their recommendations. All recommendations were intended to help ensure consistent, high-quality, safe and patient-centred care.

The new QCIPA, if passed, would maintain the existing quality improvement framework but would also provide greater clarity and help encourage better communication with and engagement of patients during the investigation of a critical incident.

The default in our health care system with respect to critical incidents should be disclosure to the affected patient and their family of all the essential information about the incident, including the facts of what occurred; the causes, where known; and the specific remedial steps that will be taken. Our proposed amendments to QCIPA will help to make it clear that QCIPA can never be a barrier to such disclosures.

So, if passed, the amended legislation would clarify the purpose of QCIPA and reaffirm the right of patients to access information about their health care. It would clarify that certain information about facts and critical incidents cannot be shielded from affected patients and their authorized representatives. It would allow the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make regulations that would require health care organizations to adopt a uniform approach when using QCIPA to review

critical incidents. It would clarify that QCIPA does not interfere with health care facilities' legal obligations to disclose information required by law or to interview patients involved in a critical incident as part of an investigation. And, finally, it would require that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would review the act every five years.

Mr. Speaker, this very important piece of legislation, if passed, will support people and patients, providing more security and protection of their personal health information, as well as ensuring the transparency and access to information that they deserve to make the right decisions about their health care. So I call on all members to support our proposed legislative amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa South.

M. John Fraser: Comme le ministre Hoskins vient de décrire, le passage de la loi en débat aujourd'hui modifierait la législation existante pour protéger les renseignements de santé personnels des patients, tout en augmentant la transparence et en maintenant une haute qualité de soins dans le système de santé de l'Ontario.

Lorsque le ministre parle de la priorisation des patients, c'est exactement ce qu'accomplit cette législation. Nous comprenons que les Ontariens exigent que leurs renseignements de santé personnels demeurent confidentiels. En même temps, nous comprenons que les Ontariens veulent que leur gouvernement soit transparent et s'engage à fournir des services de santé de haute qualité. Ce projet de loi améliorera nos efforts pour fournir le type de services que les Ontariens attendent.

As Minister Hoskins has just outlined, the passage of this legislation under debate today would amend the existing legislation to protect the personal health information of patients while also increasing the transparency and maintaining the quality of Ontario's health care system. When the minister talks about putting patients first, that is exactly what this legislation does. We understand that Ontarians expect their personal health information will remain confidential; at the same time, we understand that Ontarians also expect their government to be transparent and committed to providing quality health care services. This legislation will help strengthen our efforts to deliver the kind of services that Ontarians expect.

Let me begin by speaking to the matter of protecting patient privacy. The Health Information Protection Act would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, and several other pieces of supporting legislation to strengthen the privacy rules that protect the personal health information of individuals. These amendments, if passed, would make it mandatory to report certain privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to the breacher's relevant regulatory colleges.

This legislation would also strengthen the process to prosecute PHIPA offences by removing the requirement that prosecutions must be commenced within six months of when the alleged offence occurred. Speaker, Ontarians want to know that, should there be a breach of their per-

sonal and private health information, the province will take action. These proposed amendments effectively give the government the tools to better protect patient privacy.

I would note that the Information and Privacy Commissioner was instrumental in the development of these amendments and fully supports this legislative change to strengthen privacy protection and improve Ontario's ability to pursue prosecutions. In fact, the commissioner has stated that he is strongly in favour of the mandatory reporting of privacy breaches.

I know that many hospitals and other health care providers already voluntarily and proactively contact the commissioner's office when they discover that a privacy breach has taken place in their organization. I thank them for their dedication to protecting patient privacy. They recognize how serious this matter is, and that is a strong signal that we are on the right track with this legislation.

Reporting is an important first step, but we need to take a step further to ensure that anyone considering misusing someone's personal health information really thinks twice about it. That is why this legislation calls for the doubling of maximum fines for privacy convictions from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for an individual and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for an organization. This would serve as a deterrent for anyone who is thinking of breaching, collecting, misusing or disclosing someone's private health information for their own purposes.

Another key aspect of this legislation is that it reintroduces and updates the electronic health record privacy framework that was introduced in the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013. Most Ontarians who receive health services have some form of electronic medical record, and there are many different types of medical records, whether it's diagnostic imaging, immunization records or a document regarding hospital care.

Cette loi va établir les fondations pour que les fournisseurs de soins de santé puissent partager des dossiers de santé d'une manière sûre et sécuritaire, et voilà ce que les patients veulent savoir : que leurs dossiers soient confidentiels.

What this legislation does is build a strong foundation for enabling records to be shared among health care providers in a safe and secure fashion, and that's what the patients want to know: that their records are safe. This legislation also includes a provision that will allow the ministry to monitor information about a patient's narcotics and monitored drug prescriptions to their health care provider.

Speaker, I have spoken at length about the steps this legislation takes to protect a patient's private health information. That is just one aspect in this legislation. The Health Information Protection Act would also make great strides in improving transparency and patient safety in Ontario's health care system. In September 2014, our government convened a committee of health care experts to advise the government on ways to improve the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004—QCIPA—and health care legislation relating to critical incidents.

The committee undertook extensive research and interviewed more than 60 health care professionals, patients

and their family members who had experienced unintended or serious errors or accidents that caused them harm, as well as other service quality issues in hospitals. Their findings were presented in the QCIPA committee recommendations, and I'm pleased to say that the government is implementing all of the committee's recommendations. One of the ways we are addressing these recommendations is through this legislation right now.

Through the Health Information Protection Act, our government would replace QCIPA with a new act of the same name that will clarify the purpose and appropriate application of this legislation. It would reaffirm the rights of patients to access information about their own health care. It would spell out for everyone what information and facts about these critical incidents must be transparent and shared with affected patients and their authorized representatives.

0920

Our amendments, if passed, would clarify that QCIPA does not interfere with the right of patients and their authorized representatives to access information related to critical incidents that have occurred. This legislation would make it clear that QCIPA cannot be misused to shield from patients and their authorized representatives information about what happened, what it means for the patient and what steps the hospital is taking to prevent similar incidents from happening again. This is the kind of transparency that patients expect in their health care system.

We also want to be clear to the health care sector what we expect of them. To make sure that this happens, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be working along with the Ontario Hospital Association and Health Quality Ontario to develop training and guidance for health care facilities and professions on the issue of critical incident review and disclosure. This would help ensure that appropriate disclosure is applied more consistently in health care facilities across the province.

This legislation, if passed, will ensure we are seeing the progress that Ontarians expect with regard to transparency and disclosure by requiring that the minister review the act every five years.

We want to ensure that patients know that when a critical incident is under review, it is being done to the same high standards that they expect, regardless of where they live or which facility the incident may have occurred at.

Our government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario through our renewed action plan for health care that we would put patients first.

J'ai beaucoup parlé aujourd'hui de ce que les Ontariens attendent de leur système de soins de santé. Ils veulent savoir que leurs renseignements personnels de santé demeurent protégés et sécuritaires. Ils veulent savoir qu'ils peuvent obtenir les informations dont ils ont besoin au sujet de leur propre santé lorsqu'ils en ont besoin. Voilà pourquoi ce projet de loi est si important.

I've spoken a great deal today about what Ontarians expect of their health care system. They want to know

that their personal health information remains safe and secure, and they want to know that they can get the information they need about their own health care when they need it. That is why this proposed legislation is so important.

If passed, these amendments would help keep Ontario at the forefront of protecting privacy of health records and would ensure that patients and their families will be kept informed and have their voices heard when an investigation is required as a result of a critical incident. That's what patients want.

J'encourage tous les membres à appuyer notre législation.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support our legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Minister of Health and the member for Ottawa South, who led off the debate on this health care bill.

I noted that in their presentations neither one of them mentioned the word "eHealth," which is, of course, what comes to mind on this side of the House when the government starts talking about electronic health records. I know the minister was not in the Legislature during the eHealth scandal but I'm sure he's well aware of the fact that the Auditor General found that the government had spent over \$1 billion on the creation of this health record system. The Auditor General was highly critical and indicated that Liberal-friendly consultants received many contracts that were untendered; and, in fact, there was very little—there was some value in the work that was done, but not \$1 billion worth of value, clearly, Mr. Speaker. I think the government will need to be reminded of that and be assured that the opposition won't let them forget it.

I also would express to the minister my personal appreciation for his interest in our Groves Memorial Community Hospital project, which we discussed earlier this week in a private conversation. Again, we very much appreciate the government's commitment to proceed with a new hospital in Centre Wellington, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital. It's an issue that I've been raising in the Legislature for many, many years on behalf of the community, working with community partners. I know that the government and Infrastructure Ontario recently issued a request for qualifications, an RFQ. We're pleased that that further step has been taken. We know that the government is allowing us to disclose the time frame. We hope to have occupancy in the new hospital by the fall of 2019, with the construction phase being 2017 to 2019.

I also want to point out that the Georgetown Hospital Foundation is having a donor appreciation night tonight, and I hope to make it. They have moved forward with a magnificent new addition and expansion of their hospital emergency department and CT scanner. We're very proud of the work that's done in the Georgetown hospital

as well. I look forward to supporting them in any way I can too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mme France Gélinas: I and all of my NDP caucus are very pleased that this bill has been brought forward. I will tell you that it is high time that this bill be forward. We all know that there have been some—what I would label—catastrophic breaches of patient confidentiality, where their hospital records were accessed hundreds of times by people who had nothing to do with their circle of care. The minister was right that protection in the old days was a physical chart, and that physical chart was kept under lock and key; and when the room was open, there were staff there who protected those charts so that a chart was only made available to the person who was part—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Not always.

Mme France Gélinas: Not always. It should have—most of the time. There were breaches in the old times too, when we had paper charts; don't get me wrong. But now we have more and more moved toward an electronic health record, which means that the physical checks of the eyes and keys are not there anymore. Although we'd like to think that the system has evolved in a way that allowed us to restrict access, it is more a wish than a reality. So it falls upon the people who have access to be held accountable, to make sure they only use that privilege when it is for the patient's well-being. This is a difficult dance to follow each and every day of your career when you work in health care. I'm not sure we have it right the way it is put there, but we certainly have a good platform to work from, Speaker. I will make more remarks about this soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased the minister has brought this bill forward. It's a good piece of progressive evolution. There is a concern that has existed in the past, but rather than waste time looking back—nothing more useless than that—he is moving forward, and he's doing so in a way that's going to benefit patients and protect their rights.

I have always thought that the people who really get on well in this world are the people who get up, look at the circumstances that are there and, if they're not in keeping with what he or she thinks they ought to be, takes the steps to change them. That's exactly what has happened and is happening here. As the member opposite said, it is an issue of balance and consistent improvement. We need to be always looking at legislation to see how we can improve it. I have a sense, listening to the minister and those who have offered their two-minute comments, that confidence in the health care system really comes when you have the certain knowledge, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation that's being passed is protecting your rights, is protecting your privacy, is protecting your ability to appropriately seek redress if that doesn't happen.

So I'm pleased with the legislation. It makes sense to move forward in this way; and it will continue, as one of the honourable members said, to be shaped in the future as we, together, ascertain, as the good minister has currently, improvements that will better protect the health care privacy of individual patients and restore and keep their confidence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: When I hear about a new attempt to create an electronic record, it raises in my mind a certain spectre of government inability to do it the first time. I'm assuming that we're looking at new and improved but I think with a certain amount of skepticism, because they're difficult issues to balance: on the one side, the respect of privacy; and on the other side, the need to know. When we look at this bill, we're looking for that maintenance of balance, and the importance of being able to secure the medical records.

0930

There have been some egregious examples of people looking into the medical records of other people. I know that on an individual basis, there are issues around health records and things like that, that people are very sensitive about. They're concerned about how many people have the access to that.

It can boil down to something as simple as sitting in an emergency room, and they call out your last name as well as your first. Nobody else should know that you're sitting in the emergency room but you and the hospital staff.

I think it's a much more complicated issue than it might at first appear. We'll be watching carefully as this bill carries through the process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Ottawa South. You have two minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the member for Nickel Belt, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the member from York–Simcoe.

I just want to say that I'm pleased to hear the understanding of and the need for support for this legislation. My son James works in a hospital's medical records department. There are still paper records. Whenever I drop by to see him, there are literally rooms and rooms of paper records.

But now that all that stuff can be in a box this big, or a laptop, or something I'm not supposed to pick up—no props—that means there's some risk there, so that means we have to take greater measures to make sure we protect that information. This legislation does that. I think that's what Ontarians expect. They want to have confidence that the confidence they put into their health care providers is going to be kept. There are a lot of implications. This legislation is timely.

As far as the critical incident review, I think we can all agree, all members in this Legislature—and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills said very clearly how im-

portant his hospital was to him—on how important our hospitals are to our community and the people who live in it.

The next most important thing is that the people who have the services of those hospitals have the confidence in them, have the confidence that if something goes wrong—if there's an error, if there's a mistake—that there is transparency and clarity in the measures that have to be taken in order to disclose that incident, in order to provide information to those people affected, and also to move forward in a way that those kinds of incidents will never happen again.

I look forward to the debate. I thank all the members for their very thoughtful comments. I congratulate the minister on putting this legislation forward. Again, as I said, I think it's timely, and I think it's an important debate right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

I'm sorry, I'm a bit hoarse.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Thornhill has requested that her party stand down their lead. Do we have agreement? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I've spoken in the House before about the fact that I'm an optometrist, and I worked in a clinic where it was one of my jobs—I'll tell you, it was actually a part-time job for me. I couldn't see as many patients for about six months because we were implementing electronic health records, and it was extremely stressful.

I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care understands himself, sort of, the aspect of patients' privacy in terms of the patients themselves. It used to be that you would be seeing one patient, and an assistant or staff person might come in with a chart and a question from another patient. You would discreetly try to look, so that the patient in the room wouldn't see what was in that patient's chart. Now we have big monitors in the room sometimes, and there's a patient in the chair. When I worked as an optometrist, I was always moving the monitor.

It's as my colleague just said about an emergency room calling out a patient's name: Even these things are fundamental breaches of privacy. We have to focus on the need for good-quality health care. That's what we want to ensure. It is a balancing act, as she said. We want to make sure that the people in Ontario know that they are protected by their health care system. Of course, it has to be accountable, transparent and private, but we also have to ensure that we're not focusing on the technological gadgets all the time and we're not keeping up to date with new technologies. The fact is that a lot of these new technologies require computerization. As we're developing electronic health care records, we have to keep in mind that the technology is moving so quickly that we have to almost anticipate: What's the next level of hard-

ware and software and medical treatments that we need to constantly communicate with?

In our office, it wasn't just a matter of putting in electronic health records; it was a matter of having software between diagnostic tests to talk to the actual equipment of the electronic health care record. That was complicated and expensive, to the point that we were paying for, and continue to pay in this clinic, upkeep—software support, it's called—of three different companies because they are all interacting and talking to each other. You can see, for security issues, how complicated that is. I would say that it's very similar to the banking system, where people now—who anticipated two years ago that you would be able to take a picture of a cheque with your smartphone and have it deposited in your bank account?

With all these new technologies, yes, it simplifies life. As the member whose son works in medical records in a hospital just said, it's actually saving space, and space is very valuable because hospitals pay for the space to store all those records and pay for staff to file those records and to retrieve those records and search around for those records. One of the best parts of electronic health care records is the fact that when you have a paper chart, only one person, only one health care professional, can be looking at that chart at that time. Now with electronic health care records, multiple people can be looking at the same chart at the same time in different aspects. A patient could be having an appointment in one part of a hospital for a test, but another clinician or staff person needs to access that record for another purpose.

Right now, though, we have a fairly fragmented health care system. I think that—and I've said it before so I apologize if I'm repeating myself—we've all known, in the health care profession, that Alberta—Alberta Netcare they call it—has a fantastic e-health care system. All we had to do was go to Alberta, our friends, and say, "You have a very similar health care system for the province"—the delivery system is very similar, with a very similar mandate. I can't imagine why we couldn't have at least made the effort. I've never received an answer, not that I asked formally in writing, but I've never really received an answer from this government on why we didn't just call up our colleagues in Alberta and say, "You have this real state-of-the-art system. You've worked out all the bugs." The physicians are all integrated into the system; the hospitals are integrated; the diagnostic testing centres are integrated. Everybody is saying that it took a few years to really work those bugs out and get it working, but what would it cost us to implement it? Obviously, it wouldn't have cost us as much as it cost Alberta to set up the whole e-health, and it certainly wouldn't have cost us as much as we spent on our eHealth, which never achieved its goals.

It's a double shame because we can't just say, "We tried," when there was an e-health care system in Alberta that we could have borrowed, rented, purchased. We could have even paid the Alberta specialists to come and implement it and train our specialists. So I found it very heartbreakingly on a personal level because of the col-

leagues I would see at conferences from Alberta and they would talk about the complications. Many of them said they had already purchased e-health care systems for their office that they had to basically throw in the garbage and start over again, and they weren't complaining. Even though they had to spend that \$50,000 or \$100,000 to implement the electronic health care records, they were not complaining because the new system was working so well.

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In 2014, there were 439 cases reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office. What's interesting is that, since reporting isn't currently mandatory and this bill is going to address that, which is obviously very necessary, we don't really know what that number is if it's not mandatory. We all know that people don't tend to report things unless they know they have to. That is human nature. It's also human nature, even though it's professionals in hospitals, to try to access a celebrity. Rob Ford was a politician, but he was also a celebrity, and three hospitals had breaches of his electronic health care records because people were snooping. You could see why people are snooping: sometimes just to gossip to their friends or for their own information, but they could also be selling information to the media.

Just like I said about banking, we have to ensure—it's not enough that physicians are perhaps having electronic health care records on a laptop which they take to a conference and might be stolen. Just a few years ago, we read in the newspaper of electronic health care records that disappeared—being stolen from cars or being lost—just from laptops that weren't encrypted. It begs to mind the question that physicians, who obviously have to have a very high level of intelligence to be physicians, wouldn't understand the dire consequences of carrying around all their patients' records on their laptops and not even have a password to get into it, the most basic. But we all know that if somebody really wanted to get through a password on a laptop, they could do it. There are enough talented people. If people can break into banking systems and things like that, we know that there's nothing foolproof, but we can do our best to ensure that patients' records are protected as much as possible.

I reached out to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and they said that they are looking forward to better protection of patients' privacies, but they mentioned a few concerns, mostly about clarifying the reporting obligations and the new provisions of how to report privacy breaches. They suggest that the language be made consistent with the mandatory provisions in the Health Professions Procedural Code. That's what has to be looked at whenever we do new legislation: How does it interact with previous rules and regulations not just of the government but also of all the colleges that are affected, and hospital protocol? We understand how complicated that can be, Mr. Speaker.

In last month's Ontario Medical Review, which I'm sure the minister receives from the OMA, there was an

article about Bill 119, basically summarizing for their membership, and they mentioned something that I haven't heard mentioned yet today, which is that they expect the bill to have an opt-out system. That's kind of like negative billing, which means that patients are automatically in the system unless they ask to opt out. Again, it sometimes comes down to individual rights and freedoms versus the collective and the needs of the community.

We see that with vaccines, all the discussion of vaccines now. People feel that, ideally, their child shouldn't have to be vaccinated but everybody else's child should be, and then their child doesn't really need to be vaccinated, and we can understand that. But if we want to use the information from health care records for studies to see if there are side effects from certain medications, we all understand that the incredible ability of computerization is that you can do searches and say, "Do a search of all the health care records of everybody on this medication who has this symptom," and it's very possible that things could come up.

There is also the aspect that patients sometimes go to multiple doctors, and one doctor doesn't know that the patient is seeing another doctor. They go to multiple pharmacies and they might have medications that they don't want one doctor to know about, other medications. That creates problems for the doctors. Ultimately, the doctors are responsible for the health care of the patients, and it puts them in a tough bind sometimes, because if they don't have all the information in front of them, how can they possibly make informed decisions about their patients?

I'm just looking here, again, at the incredible system that Alberta has, and wondering why we're not doing more than just protecting the privacy of patients. Why aren't we finally addressing the fact that Ontario does not have a state-of-the-art electronic health care record system? EHealth spent over \$1 billion. Actually, for years, we heard that, yes, the eHealth part of it wasn't implemented but there was going to be a registry of diabetic patients in the province, and we were going to be able to do great research and information exchange. Even that didn't get done.

It's not enough to say, as one of the ministers stated, that what's in the past is in the past. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. As the government, even in opposition, it's our responsibility to ensure that the taxpayers' money is used wisely and used for the purpose for which it was intended. It was intended that patients would have not just electronic health care records in their physician's office, not just electronic health care records in a hospital, but that all of the different systems were going to be able to interact. They do not interact right now.

Interestingly enough, I've gotten a few calls in the last couple of weeks from physicians who say that they have stopped receiving the government payments to cover the portion of their investment for electronic health care records. I haven't had the opportunity, but maybe now it's an opportunity for me to ask the health care minister

what's happening with compensation for physicians, for private clinics.

One physician I spoke to just this past week said that two of the specialists, who work predominantly at SickKids, who come to his pediatric clinic in Richmond Hill only work one day a week—sometimes one day every two weeks. One is an allergist, and I think one might be a rheumatologist—a pediatric allergist and a pediatric rheumatologist. They say, "Well, if we're not receiving that \$300 or \$400 a month to cover our share of your electronic health care records, we just want to go back to paper records."

What I said to this physician is—

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Oh, come on.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. I said, "Come on. They're not going to really want to have paper charts in your office. I'm sure that you could give them a piece of paper."

Luckily enough, a lot of paper does still go through medical offices, but what happens to it is that it gets scanned and uploaded as an attachment to the electronic health care record. Yes, we can't say that these offices are paperless, because referrals are coming in through the fax machines and things like that, but at least they don't have to pay to store those charts and they don't have to look for those charts all day long.

It's very frustrating. As somebody who spent many hours in my former profession looking for patients' charts—there's nothing worse. As somebody who worked with her husband—probably the most stressful part of working with my husband in a medical clinic was that he would accuse me of having the chart, and I would accuse him of having the chart, and invariably it was me who was at fault. I have to say that those charts pile up, and somewhere in there is the chart that I should have put for re-filing.

I think there is a question among patients about accessing their records if they move out of the province. That's always a very big question, and a problem for many patients. When they move out of the province, how do their records get accessed? Are they going to be able to get a printed copy or an electronic copy?

Right now, a lot of diagnostic tests, even MRIs and ultrasounds, are put digitally on a DVD, and the patients have to go pick it up from the hospital after a radiologist has viewed it and actually transport it to another hospital where they have an appointment with another specialist. That is an incredible waste of people's time. It's an incredible waste of money, because they have to put it on a DVD and bring it to another hospital. When you have a great system like Alberta—and even Newfoundland, supposedly, has a better e-health system than we have in Ontario, which is quite shocking. That's not what the digital age is all about.

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It's a little bit like us here in the Legislature. We are not using electronic devices. It's a historic place here. It's about protocol. It's a bit old-fashioned, I guess, for most people, but it's not the most efficient place. I'm sure that

the people at the Hansard desk would love it if, instead of sending around pieces of paper to them, we could just press “send” from our device, and we would send them our notes, and they could just upload it.

That’s exactly how health care systems are supposed to work. It shouldn’t be patients picking up DVDs from one hospital to bring to another, as is happening in downtown Toronto right now. I know that even very recently, patients had to go from Mount Sinai to a nearby hospital and pick up a DVD. I’m just shocked when I hear that kind of thing. There’s duplication of services, because if patients are seen in an emergency room up at their cottage and have a test done, when they come to Toronto and they say to their doctor, “Well, I had a test done,” the doctor says, “It’s easier for me just to reorder the test and send you to redo the test than it is for me to access that information.” That’s a waste of health care dollars.

I think that’s sort of what it’s all about. Yes, it’s very important to spend the money updating the privacy of electronic health records. At the same time, it’s more important to make sure we have a state-of-the-art electronic health care system. I don’t know why we are just focusing on one aspect of eHealth instead of revamping the whole thing.

This is part of the problem: Health care dollars—too much is being spent on bureaucracy. Invariably, patients understand that rent has to be paid and staff have to be paid, but with a real state-of-the-art electronic health care record system, patients’ privacy could be protected and the efficiencies could be there. Yes, it’s an initial investment; we see how expensive it is. Maybe it is not too late to ask Alberta for some support or help.

Most hospitals now have electronic health care systems in place. The problem is that different hospitals have different systems and, yes, the doctors’ offices that are part of the government-approved system to get support funding have to be on specific electronic health care record companies. I think there were five companies they were allowed to use. But there are still many physicians who are outside of that loop; they’re not getting any government support or funding, but they’re using electronic health care records systems that are not able to be integrated into any kind of health care system that we implement here. I think that one of our concerns is that, yes, we can oversee the privacy concerns of any health care record system that is integrated in the loop for the government, but what about all these private clinics where people basically just make a Word document, and they call that an electronic health care record, and they type it into the computer? Maybe it’s a bit old-school, but they feel that they’re retiring in a few years and don’t feel like investing \$100,000 in electronic health care records.

I think that I’ve pretty much covered what I wanted to say today. Thank you very much, and I look forward to the comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It’s been an interesting conversation so far. I heard the minister actually speak about

how these changes are going to provide some balance, as well, in the system.

I worked for many years representing nurses in the health care system. Yes, as the member from Thornhill said, sometimes workers were a bit nosy, looking at patient records. But there have been situations in this province where nurses and other health care workers—but nurses in particular, because that’s who I represented—were terminated from their jobs, and we were unable to get their jobs back. Some of them were actually viewing patient records as a learning tool.

I’ll give you one example: a nurse in one of the hospitals that I represented who worked in the emergency department part-time and worked in the step-down ICU part-time. On Sunday, he might be working in the emergency department and he might have seen 20 patients during his shift. On Monday, he’d come in and he was looking after a different group of patients; maybe some of them were admitted to that unit; maybe they weren’t. This nurse would go back and actually look at some of the patients that he saw in the emergency department and was treating on the Sunday. That was considered a violation of the legislation because those patients were no longer in his circle of care. He was going back to see, “Did that patient really have a myocardial infarction, or was it just indigestion and was he sent home? Was I correct?” He was terminated from his job. We were unable to get the job back.

I think that there needs to be something in the legislation that takes into consideration that nursing is a caring profession, and sometimes they want to continue to make that connection with their patients.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I’m assuming the member from Thornhill has a sense of humor about this because I’m a little perplexed. You and I and 14 million Ontarians paid \$30,000 to put eHealth in place in every single doctor’s office. They all got a \$30,000 cheque. At that time, I ran a business. I had to have electronic health records; I had to pay for my own.

Then they’d been paid, up until this year, thousands of dollars a year to operate that system. Tell me anybody else—a rheumatologist who makes over \$500,000 a year easily in many cases is now simply being asked to do that. To suggest, as the member from Thornhill did, that these people should go back to using paper is insulting to the people of Ontario who paid for that.

My doctor and most doctors are fine folks. My partner is an operating room nurse. My mother has battled cancer. The electronic records here, or at least the medical records almost everyone has—80% of docs have electronic records. I ran a health care centre in Manitoba. I saw my mother battle breast cancer in Quebec. Our electronic health records, I would argue, are the best in Canada. I’m amazed, having to support my mom, at how easy it is, how connected her pharmacologist is to the other specialists she sees. It is an extraordinarily good—when she went into one of the other care—when she frac-

tured her hip, it was there instantaneously. There are not that many places in the world that have that.

The irony, coming from a member of the Conservative Party: We inherited an electronic system that was so badly, badly conceived and so redundant, we had to dump it because no one, including the best specialists, could figure out how to do it. That's where most of the money was lost in the so-called eHealth scandal. It was actually your scandal, because over 50%—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of your colleagues is laughing. Fact on the record: Most of the costs were to dump a system the Tories brought in that didn't work. Have a little humility.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, and to comment on the speech from the member from Thornhill. I think she did make some very useful comments, and of course, she does have a background in the health field.

In particular, I think one of the best comments she made was that we should look at other jurisdictions. Instead of always trying to come up with a unique Ontario solution, if someone else has already got a good system, why not use their system? We do have a bad track record in Ontario, as borne out by the Auditor General's reports, where we spent a lot of money and have not necessarily gotten that great a value for our money.

If Alberta has a system that's working really well, why not look at Alberta and use some of their expertise instead of trying to come up with our own system? I just got a Presto card that allows you to use the TTC, GO Transit and other transit systems. I wondered why Ontario took so long to get that when, back in 1988, I was in Hong Kong and they had a card then in Hong Kong—and in London, England, they have the Oyster card. Yet with that card, from what I understand, we did the same thing. We had to create our own system instead of looking around the world, where so many other systems have worked for years and years and years and years.

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I expect we could save a lot of money and have it in place a lot faster if we took that approach. As the member from Thornhill recommended, I think we need to look at other jurisdictions that have already found solutions to some of our problems and learn from them and use their expertise.

Ontario has been pretty slow on the electronic health records file, and it's something that's vital to improving both the quality and the efficiency of our health care system. I'm glad we're getting around to it now, but I think we should learn from other jurisdictions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to rise on Bill 119. It's not every day in the House that you get to

talk directly to the health minister. I'm going to take that opportunity to do that in line with this bill.

Some of the concerns that we're reading about are about our seniors and what's going on in our communities right across the province of Ontario. The issue is very clear that we have a system that's supposed to be publicly funded and publicly delivered. So people, and in particular seniors, are thinking that that means that they're going to have health care when they're over 65. And what we're finding in the province of Ontario, unfortunately, is that that's not the case.

We had a terrible example, as you're aware, Minister, with what happened with US Steel in the courts just a couple of weeks ago. I watched it on CHCH, and it brought tears to my eyes. We had a group of seniors, 70 or 75 years old, who had diabetes or high blood pressure, or they had cancer that they needed some treatment for. They were cut off on the Thursday, that day. The very next day, the pharmacy was calling them to tell them they had no coverage. Can you imagine being 70 years old in the province of Ontario and being told that you no longer have medication? You've got some very tough choices: Do you sell your house? Do you ask your kids to help you out? When you're sick and you're 70 years old or 75 years old or 80 years old, you can't go back to work.

We have a real crisis here. When you take a look at drug costs, they think their drugs are covered. I think it's an education process for our seniors. We're going to have to tell them that in our system today they're going to have to pay for drugs. That's the way it is. If you take a look at it in the study, I have it right here—you can shake your head, Doctor; I'll bring it over to you because I read it this morning—they are saying that it's going to cost seniors over \$5,000 a year just to pay for drugs. Thank you very much; I'd like to talk longer with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Thornhill. You have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for his comments, and my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka as well as the member from Niagara Falls.

What I would say is—obviously I have to have a sense of humor if I'm going to survive working here. Maybe the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change misheard, but I very clearly stated that these two specialists work between two to four days a month in a clinic. That's not their full-time job. When they state that they don't want to pay \$400 in fees to be on an electronic health care records system for working two days a month, that's their choice; that's their statement. That was not my suggestion to them, as he stated. I want to correct that on the record.

In terms of his statement that the specialists make \$500,000, I would like to see a review of what pediatric allergists make. Perhaps they bill \$500,000 and then they have their expenses to pay. I have no idea what they bill and I have no idea what they make, but I would say that's

very presumptuous of him to come out with a number like that.

One area that we actually haven't touched on that I would like to just mention is e-prescriptions. Right now, doctors are still filling out prescriptions, and that's a huge place for human error. Maybe their computer prints it out so it's a little bit neater, but I think that we all would really love to see the communication directly from the actual computer device go to the pharmacist.

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes. Some clinics do have it.

When I see my doctor, I'm still given a prescription by hand, so obviously it's not happening in every clinic. I am aware that it happens in many places, but I think that patients want to have that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your comments.

Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess I will have nine minutes this morning to start my one-hour lead. Maybe I will use my nine minutes to go through the entire bill, and when I have a chance to finish my 51-minute lead, I will go into more details as to parts of the bill that need improvement.

To start out with, Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004, is a tough piece of legislation to wrap your head around. It has 37 pages of changing bits and pieces of legislation in a number of different pieces of legislation.

I have been here for over eight years. I have read many, many health bills in those eight years. Whenever a bill starts with a four-page explanatory note, you know that you're in for—

Ms. Cindy Forster: A ride.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You're in for a ride, and it's really hard.

The problem is that each and every one of us will be impacted by this bill. We have to get it right. If we get it wrong, we will do immense damage to our health care system.

Why do I say this? I say this because trust is at the heart of our health care system. For quality care to take place, there needs to be a relationship of trust between human beings, between somebody who is in need of care and somebody who is able to help them, with their knowledge of health care. If that relationship of trust is broken, no quality care will ever take place.

This piece of legislation, in a sense, is playing catch-up, because right now, the way that our Personal Health Information Protection Act is written—it was written in 2004. In 2004, electronic health records were in their infancy. We could get your name, OHIP number and address electronically, but everything else was in a paper chart.

This piece of legislation absolutely needs to change. It needs to realize that we are in 2015 and that most health care providers are now using an electronic health record. How well it works is a question for another day. Some of

it doesn't work worth beans; some of it works better. But at the end of the day, the electronic health record is there.

The opportunity for this relationship of trust to be broken is also there. That's why this piece of legislation is important. It needs to move forward, and we need to get it right.

What can we do to better protect the health information that is shared between—we'll call them patients and caregivers, or clients and health providers, but you get the idea. How do we do that better? This act takes a number of steps to bring us there. It will talk about who is responsible for keeping this safe. How can we, as clients, as patients, decide who has access and who does not have access?

It goes on to penalties. Who will be held responsible if something goes wrong? What are the penalties to the actual employee, worker, physician, the person who was the custodian of that information?

It also goes on to say that there will be people who will have access to that information in order to manage our health care system, because the better you know the health of the people of Ontario, the better you can plan. I can see the importance of that. Now that information is being collected electronically, it allows us to do things that we were never able to do before: to collect data, to see trends, to see differences regionally or based on race or sex or whatever else, so that we can adjust our health care system.

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All of this is great if you can do it in a way that protects patient information, because once that information goes out into the public sphere, once it is on the Web, we will never be able to regain that trust. This is like one of those bank accounts where you can make many, many deposits into a trust account but you only make one withdrawal. Once you make one withdrawal, once you have lost this trust, the account is empty and will stay empty forever. I want us to get this right, but life shows us that we are a long way from that.

Others have mentioned what happened to Mr. Rob Ford, whose personal health records were accessed over 100 times by people who had nothing to do with providing care to this man. This is wrong; this is wrong on every level that you look at. We had other cases where people were actually collecting data when a new child was born in this province and selling that information to a baby photographer so he knew who to contact so that he could sell baby photography to them. This is wrong. This is wrong on every level that you look at.

This bill puts steps in place to make sure this never happens again. But there is a big “if” and there is a big “but” in there. It assumes that the electronic health system will be able to block things, will be able to shelter information from some people, some part of your chart. Unfortunately, the systems we have in place right now—whether you look at the system the health units are using, Panorama, or that the different hospitals are using, or community health centres or family health teams, they're all using different systems but none of them has the elec-

tronic ability to do this in a way that is electronically secure.

What does that mean? That means that responsibility then lies on the shoulders of the people who use that information. So the education of the people within the system will be huge in order for them to comply with a bill that is so tough to understand. Although I have been here for a long time, and I follow the health file very closely, I have a hard time understanding it. Can you see the disconnect there, Speaker?

We are putting forward a bill that depends on electronic means that do not exist at the present time. I sure hope those will become available—the sooner the better—but right now, as we speak, they are not available; so then the responsibility shifts to health care providers and anybody else who works within the health care system, whether it be the custodian, the medical secretary, the receptionist or anybody else who happens to be around at the time.

Then there's the other big elephant in the room: that more and more of our programs and services that used to be delivered within the hospital system—a hospital has means. They have a reputation and they have many reasons to want to get it right. They will have their lawyers look at this; they will have a way to teach their staff and physicians to make sure they understand. But more and more the programs and services that used to be within our hospitals are now being transferred into private clinics, into the community. Our hospitals are being told that if it is not acute hospital care, then it is okay to send it off. Most of them are under really tight budgets. They look at where they can decrease their expenses, cut costs, and they say, "If we stop offering outpatient physio, then we don't have to pay for those services anymore, and those services will be provided by for-profit physio clinics in the community. If we stop providing colonoscopies and let a private clinic in the community do them, those are savings that we can achieve." And they're doing this; they're doing this full tilt. Did you know, Speaker, that—my time?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I see the member from Parkdale—High Park on a point of order?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You see the member for introductions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Let me do my normal rotation, please.

Introductions? The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome members of the Persian francophone association of Ontario. They're pretty well known in North York, Thornhill and Richmond Hill, and they come from many diverse cultures and backgrounds. We have Bijan Mahjari, Narges Mozassari and Noushin Hashemi. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We have a number of trans activists and their allies here in the gallery: Steven Little, Luke Fox, Melissa Hudson, Lauren Hetherington, Christine Newman, Nicki Ward, Maya Cole, Davina Hader, Susan Gapka, Christopher Karas, Claire McConnell, Tim McConnell, Monique Chin, Christin Milloy, Mathieu Chantelois, Marg Foy, Maurice Tomlinson, and Stella and Jessica Skinner. We welcome you all to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a number of visitors visiting here today, and I want to start off by welcoming a class of grade 12 students visiting from the Toronto Ouest French school in my riding of Davenport, accompanied by their teacher, Monsieur Edmond. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to introduce Joan Blair, the mother of my LA, Tiff Blair, who is visiting from Montreal today. Welcome.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome two visitors in the members' gallery who are joining us for question period this morning from Oakville. The page from Oakville in this session is Brooke Westwater; her brother, Noah, and her grandmother, Carol, are here to watch Brooke, and she is the page captain today. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome one of my constituency assistants from Belleville, Ontario, Canada. Ashley Harnden is here with us today.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wish to introduce a committee of delegates visiting us from Portugal this week on the occasion of the Transmontano Folklore Group of Toronto's 34th anniversary celebration this Saturday. They just walked in: Dr. Artur Nunes, mayor of Miranda Do Douro region; Celmira Macedo, president of the LEQUE Association; Helder Ferreira, curator of the Iberian Masks; members of the folk group Lenga Lenga; and Ana Costa, president of the Transmontano Folklore Group of Toronto. I extend a warm welcome to them and wish them a fabulous time here in Ontario. Bem-vindos.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to take this opportunity to acknowledge some guests who are with us: Saira Kirefu and Husein Kirefu. They are the mother and father of page captain Aminah Kirefu, from my riding of Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I just saw them walk in: I would like to introduce a class of grade 5 students visiting the Legislature from St. Nicholas of Bari Catholic School in my riding of Davenport, accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Rose Di Pede. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to recognize a few birthdays that are occurring either today or in the next day. One of our colleagues, MPP Martins, is celebrating her birthday today. Happy birthday. Also,

Minister Dipika Damerla's will be upcoming, and Minister Meilleur will be celebrating her birthday this weekend.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It gives me great pleasure to welcome my uncle Don Archer and Audrey, but I would like to talk to you afterwards about explaining why you didn't tell me you were attending question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First time I've ever heard a reprimand in an introduction. I thought that was pretty good.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It is with great pleasure this morning that I would like to introduce members of our great city of Ottawa. On behalf of the Ottawa caucus, I would like to welcome David Gourlay; his wife, Danielle McGee; and their very newborn Sophia McGee-Gourlay in the House this morning, in our Legislature. Thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's try not to make the baby cry.

The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: With your indulgence, this is really more of a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have with today me a plaque that I received as the Canadian delegation lead in Mexico, that was presented to me. I was there replacing the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The plaque is in fact made out in his name, and I would like to give it to him today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Go right ahead. That's actually not a point of order.

However, that said, I do have a point of order—wait a minute; I have the member from Nickel Belt. On an introduction?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Introduction, yes. Were you done with introductions, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm trying to be lenient but I don't think it's going to work.

Carry on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de présenter des étudiants de l'école Toronto Ouest, des étudiants de 12^e année. On a ici avec nous, dans la galerie, Darya Arzani, Denis Beslimov, Éloïse Slater, Jeremy Young et John-Alex Duff-Wilson. On a Marcos Santos, Nicolas Karwowski, Patrishia DeMille, Simone Helston, Tiana Crosbie, ainsi que leur enseignant, M. Simon Edmond. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Parkdale High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise on a point of order. I believe we have unanimous consent—and by the way, this is an historic first for a jurisdiction of this size, so I thank

all members—that we rise and observe a moment of silence for the Trans Day of Remembrance, to recognize and honour those hundreds who have been killed or have died due to anti-trans hatred and anti-trans prejudice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale—High Park is seeking a unanimous consent to provide a moment of silence in respect of transgender deaths. Do we agree? Agreed. I would ask all members of the House to please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Just before we begin, I would just indicate that it was the first time I had anything like the member from Beaches—East York doing this. I'm going to recommend that it not become a habit. It was actually not a point of order and I'd appreciate not doing those kinds of things in the House during business time.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Acting Premier: We all know there's money coming in from the Hydro One fire sale, but what we really know is that money is not going for infrastructure. The plan the Premier touts was announced in a budget a full year prior, without the sale of Hydro One. It cost \$130 billion in 2014. That was the planning for infrastructure over 10 years. In 2015, it was still \$130 billion, with not a single cent added for infrastructure. There is no new money. This is a shell game. Is the government willing to explain why the infrastructure budget hasn't changed by one cent?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to answer this question, and I have to say I'm a bit surprised by it, because we are making a historic investment in infrastructure, and we do have to pay for that infrastructure.

We've always been very clear that the revenue that will pay for the new infrastructure will come from a variety of sources, including maximizing the value of our assets.

I'm very pleased that we've generated almost \$3 billion so far on the Hydro One IPO. We will be making other decisions that will pay for the infrastructure that this province so desperately needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: Even if the government does spend \$1.4 billion from the fire sale on infrastructure, it would only account for 1% of the infrastructure budget. This isn't about infrastructure. The FAO actually said it would be cheaper to borrow money, yet the Liberal government plowed ahead with this plan anyway.

The Hydro One fire sale, I will repeat, is not about infrastructure. There is no new infrastructure money. It is a ruse—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing it on both sides, and I'm going to have to kind of tighten it up. If you don't do it, I will.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Given that there are no changes in the infrastructure budget, will the government tell the House—no more shell games, no more distractions: Is the money going to pay for your next scandal, or was it the last one?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a bizarre line of questioning. We've always been very, very clear: We're committed to making those investments in infrastructure. We're not going to do it by raising taxes and we're not going to do it by slashing services. The way forward that we have chosen is to get maximum value from the infrastructure, the assets that we already have.

We will be investing in infrastructure, including infrastructure that I think should be very important to the member from Barrie. One of the projects that we will be expanding significantly is the Barrie line, from 70 trips a week to over 200 trips a week. If the member from Barrie doesn't think we should be making this investment for the people of Barrie, then I think he's got some explaining to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: I get a sense that your own caucus doesn't buy this spin, doesn't buy this ridiculous assertion that it's for infrastructure.

Let me share with you a few examples. The member for York West once said, "There is nothing the public of Ontario ... will benefit from with the sale of Hydro One."

The member from Peterborough said, "We've been pretty clear" that the Liberals will "keep ... Hydro One in the public's hands," as it should be.

The member from St. Catharines is on the record as saying, "I think anyone who looks objectively at" the Hydro One fire sale "would recognize that it ... is best kept in ... public hands."

How does the Premier justify having those members—in her cabinet—publicly disagree with her? Why does she ignore them at the cabinet table? Listen to your own caucus members.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, when it comes to listening to one's caucus, I'm not inclined to take lessons from that member opposite.

I think our caucus is absolutely committed to building the infrastructure of the future of this province. Every single one of our caucus members hears from the municipal leaders about the need for investments in infrastructure.

When we talk to our municipal councils, when we talk to our business people, they are unanimous in saying we need to invest in infrastructure.

The party opposite had the chance to invest in infrastructure. Instead of building infrastructure, they filled in the hole that was already being dug for the Eglinton subway. That's their attitude on infrastructure; it sure is not ours.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE ET FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: Since this government doesn't want to talk about why there's no new money for infrastructure, let's talk about the skills mismatch. I know this government is well aware of the surplus of young Ontarians graduating from teachers' college—two graduates for every one job—but their solution of extending teachers' college by a year simply won't make a dent in a larger problem.

The amount of new teachers is just one example of the growing skills gap in our province. Two things I hear regularly are that employers can't find qualified candidates and that young Ontarians don't have the skills for the jobs available today.

Young people are forced to leave Ontario because they can't find work, because of the skills gap. The gap is even costing Ontario's economy \$24.3 billion a year and \$3.7 billion in forgone tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, will the government tell us what they're doing to deal with the significant skills mismatch that exists in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're making unprecedented investments in skills and training, and I have to say that our record on education is an extraordinary record. I think even the members of the opposite party have to acknowledge that when our graduation rate has gone from 68% to 84% since they were in charge of our education system, kids are getting an opportunity that they never would have had if they dropped out of high school.

Our investments in education are having a profound impact on the success of our young people. We're continuing to make investments. We've built a very strong foundation, cleaning up the mess that was left behind by the Conservatives when they had the chance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I appreciate the Acting Premier answering a different question, so I'll try again and be a bit more specific.

While Ontario graduates 4,000 new teachers each year without a job for them after they graduate—I visit places like Cambrian College, where there are more jobs available than there are graduates in their power line program.

The skills gap exists in this province; it is real. As many as 52% of engineering and infrastructure firms have difficulty hiring someone with the qualifications they need. Employers shouldn't have to go beyond Ontario to find workers, and, frankly, young people shouldn't have to leave Ontario to find jobs.

Mr. Speaker, can the government outline to us what plans they have to deal with the skills gap?

Don't say it doesn't exist. It exists. What are you going to do to solve the problem?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report to the House that our universities and colleges have been doing the best job in the world. We have the best universities and the best colleges in the world. This year, Queen's University produced a Nobel Prize winner in physics.

We are very proud of our graduates. Around the world, the graduates of our universities and colleges are very well thought of. This is something we have to be very proud of.

In relation to the teachers' profession, we are aware of that, and in the future, the demand and the supply of teachers will be balanced. Of course, during the years when the NDP and the Conservatives were in office, there was an enormous shortage of teachers. We have met that demand. Now there's a supply and demand discrepancy somehow, but that will be rectified in the coming years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: Another gap exists in education in Ontario, and that relates to francophone education.

Depuis les trois dernières années, la communauté franco-ontarienne me dit que nous avons besoin de créer une nouvelle université de langue française en Ontario.

Partout en Ontario, les francophones souhaitent gérer eux-mêmes leurs programmes universitaires au sein d'une université par et pour les francophones, comme c'est déjà le cas pour leurs écoles, leurs conseils solaires et leurs collèges.

C'est pourquoi notre parti appuie le projet d'université franco-ontarienne et demande au gouvernement d'agir rapidement pour appuyer cet important projet.

Quand est-ce que le gouvernement va répondre à la demande de la communauté franco-ontarienne et s'engager à mettre sur pied cette institution?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing post-secondary education in the French language. That's why we have two bilingual universities in Ontario and we have two fully French-language colleges in our province of Ontario. We are committed to providing post-secondary education.

1050

Today, there are 22,000 students in our province of Ontario that receive post-secondary education in French language in our universities and colleges. In 2014-15, we invested \$90 million to support French language training in our universities and colleges.

I am aware of the aspirations and desires of our francophone community. I have been talking with the student groups and the community groups. We have also

established an administrative advisory committee on the French language, whose report will be issued to you next March, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. More than 185 municipalities have called on this Premier of our province to keep Hydro One public. But yesterday, every Liberal in the House voted to ignore municipalities.

Why is this Liberal government refusing to listen to people everywhere, from Atikokan to Zorra, who want the hydro sell-off stopped?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I must say that everyone from Atikokan to Zorra also wants investments in infrastructure, and that is exactly what this is about. We have assets; we need different kinds of assets for the future. The assets in infrastructure must be built. They must be built now. We have a plan to build those and to pay for them.

Municipalities have spoken to every single member of our caucus. I expect that every single member in this House have heard from municipalities, loud and clear, that these investments in infrastructure must be made and they must be made now. That is what we are delivering on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over 80% of Ontarians want the Premier to keep Hydro One public. But yesterday, every Liberal in the House voted to ignore Ontarians, and, trust me, Speaker, Ontarians are going to be hearing about that.

Why is this Liberal government refusing to listen to such an overwhelming majority of Ontarians who want the sell-off of Hydro One stopped?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You know, it's interesting: I had the privilege to speak yesterday afternoon to the motion that the leader of the NDP is talking about. In the discussion yesterday afternoon, I asked a question of her and her party which, of course, didn't get an answer. I guess I will put that question back to her.

It's also delightful that she asks about caucus members on this side of the House, given how many of her caucus colleagues have significant requests for infrastructure investments in their communities. Whether it's Hamilton or it's London or it's the north or it's Windsor or it's Durham or it's Kitchener—any of those regions across the province—they want more investments, and I wonder if the leader of the NDP will come clean and tell her caucus colleagues which of their projects she would cancel if she had the choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Businesses know that the Hydro One sell-off is bad for them. But yesterday, every Liberal in this House voted to ignore small business, big business, manufacturing, the agricultural industry, the

mining industry—you name it, Speaker. Every one of those sectors does not want to see any more sell-off of Hydro One.

Why is this Liberal government refusing to listen to the job creators in this province? Why are they refusing to listen? Why will they not stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think it's unfortunate that the leader of the NDP has a different perspective on this. What every single member in this government caucus voted for yesterday was continuing to build this province up and moving it forward.

Specifically, we voted for a re-established Connecting Link fund. We voted for extended GO service to Hamilton, specifically to Stoney Creek. We voted for two-way all-day GO service across all of our seven corridors. We even voted yesterday for the potential to extend GO trains for Niagara region.

To support the north, to support the southwest, to support all regions of this province: That's what we voted for. The question is, why won't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on. Order. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier—but I must say I think it's funny that the Minister of Transportation has no idea that in that big list of projects he just mentioned, each one of them will likely cost more than the \$1.4 billion they're getting for the sell-off of Hydro One. How sad is that?

This is a question, now, to the Acting Premier that's about integrity and honesty. Just over a year ago, the Premier stood right here in this House in her place and she said to me, "There is not a sell-off of these companies." But here we are.

Can the Acting Premier explain why anyone in this province should trust the current Premier and the current Liberal government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It was to the Acting Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I apologize. It's a new question.

Same question, new question, the answer remains the same: We will be raising \$9 billion through the sale of a portion of Hydro One. That number was confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer. The Leader of the Opposition wants to pretend that that is not the right number, but that is the number that was confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer.

In fact, we have already collected almost \$3 billion, cash in hand, received through the IPO. We are going to

use that money to pay down debt and to build badly needed infrastructure.

We know the NDP doesn't think that's a good idea. We also know that the NDP has no idea how they would pay—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the question is actually going to the integrity of this government. In October 2014, the Minister of Finance who is sitting right there now looked me in the eye and said, "We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets." That's what he said in this chamber, in this House. But last week, they issued a press release bragging about the province's sale of Hydro One.

It is time for this government to take a step towards regaining the trust of the people of this province. Will the Liberals stand by their previous commitments and stop any further sell-off of Hydro One or any other revenue-generating asset in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, that's interesting. We have put the notion and the reason as to why we're looking at our assets—all of it, for that matter: to do a full review of how to maximize the value for the public and the people of Ontario. We put it in the 2014 budget, which that member didn't even have the decency to respond to or talk to the press about. In fact, they turned their backs on Ontarians when they voted it down the second time around, where we had the option and the opportunity to again reinforce the review of our assets, including real estate, including passive shares, including Hydro One.

In the 2015 budget, we reaffirmed the increases on the optimization of those assets, the dedication of increases to the Moving Ontario Forward plan equivalent to the amount of asset valuation increases, again to be reinvested, dollar for dollar, for the people of Ontario and for our future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In October 2014, the Premier of this province said here in this House, "We're not selling off the assets." Put simply, the Premier has broken trust with the people of Ontario. She didn't run on selling assets, she promised them thereafter that she wasn't going to sell the assets and then, Speaker, she proceeded to start selling off the assets of the people of this province.

Will the Acting Premier show that integrity, keep the promises that the Premier and this Liberal government have made and stop any further sell-off of Hydro One or any other revenue-generating asset that the people of this province own?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we promised that we would increase the valuation of our assets for the benefit of the people of Ontario, and we did that in the IPO for only 15% of that transaction, which equated to a net of \$3 billion to reinvest in Trillium Trust, to reinvest in infrastructure—and an additional billion dollars to pay down debt.

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We said that, and this is what the leader of the opposition said in July 2014. She read the same budget, apparently, that the rest of us did, and she says this: “The budget says in black and white that the government is looking at the sale of assets, ‘including ... crown corporations, such as Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.’” She said it, Mr. Speaker.

We are going forward with maximizing value for the people of Ontario and reinvesting those funds dollar for dollar, as stipulated in our budget.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier. All we’ve seen from this Liberal government is one scandal after another. The recurring theme is they can never get their stories straight.

During the gas plant scandal, they couldn’t get their story straight on who paid Peter Faist to delete the files off the government computers. It turns out that the tax-payers paid the \$10,000.

Now the government can’t get their story straight on the Sudbury bribery scandal. First, they didn’t know who paid Gerry’s Lougheed’s legal bills; then it wasn’t the government; and now we know the Liberals paid the bills until he was charged. But the Premier stated that Gerry Lougheed doesn’t speak for the Liberal Party. So my question is, why did the Liberals pay his legal fees in the first place?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier made it very clear yesterday that the government has not paid anything towards the legal bills here. The party is not paying anything.

This is an issue that’s in the courts, and we’ll have no further comment on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, back to the Deputy Premier: The recurring theme with this scandal-plagued government is they can never get their stories straight.

In the teachers’ union scandal, it was \$1 million; it was for pizzas—no, wait; it’s \$3 million; it’s for negotiating—no, wait; it’s for labour peace. Every single day, the story changed.

Now in the Sudbury bribery scandal, it’s obvious that many Liberals are going to be subpoenaed by the crown or by Mr. Lougheed’s lawyers. They’d better get their story straight before they swear an oath. But I’m curious: Will they be in court standing up for Ontario’s taxpayers or for the Liberal Party? And my question is, will the

Premier and her deputy chief of staff be testifying for the crown or for the defence?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we’re not going to speculate on an issue that’s before the courts.

REFUGEES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Canada has promised to welcome 25,000 Syrians, and New Democrats are proud to support this commitment. We are proud to stand with Ontarians to welcome Syrian refugees to our community. It’s a part of our strong tradition of respecting the importance of bringing in immigrants, and standing up for the global community, and respecting the refugees in our society.

But a promise is not enough alone. We also need a plan. This government needs to come forward with a plan to ensure that these people receive the adequate services they so desperately need.

What is this government’s plan when it comes to housing, support services and language services for these refugees who so desperately need assistance in addition to just promises?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for that question. I think we are united in the understanding that Ontario is a welcoming place, that we are a place where people from around the world can find a safe haven. I am delighted that Ontario is stepping up to create the conditions for successful integration into our communities of these refugees coming from Syria.

We have established an ad hoc group of ministers, co-chaired by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. I am honoured to be a member of that committee.

I will give the supplementary to the Minister of Health, who can talk about the issues that we are dealing with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I’m encouraged by the fact that our province has made a strong commitment, and I’m encouraged by the fact that our country has made a strong commitment. We also need a strong plan to back up this commitment. We need an actual plan with respect to affordable housing to ensure that refugees are housed. We need an actual plan to ensure that there are the health services so that people are adequately taken care of. And we need to ensure that there are language support services.

In addition, we’ve heard today from a press conference that there is a growing backlash against Islamophobia and there’s a growing backlash against community members who will be coming in against the refugees. We need a provincial strategy to ensure that this is responded to with

strong language, that we support refugees and that we have a security plan in place.

Will the Acting Premier provide a clear plan on how our province will address all of these important areas so that we can have an actual committed way to bring in these refugees and not just an empty promise?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the member opposite realizes that we have yet to get the specific details in terms of the numbers of refugees who will be coming to Ontario, as well as where and when—the timetable.

Given that we expect in the coming days to receive more detailed information, we are working hard in a co-ordinated way, not just across government, but with civil society and our many, many partners. Whether it's in the education system, housing, settlement agencies that have tremendous expertise in this area, or the health care system, I'm quite frankly amazed at the enthusiasm and confidence that all of these sectors have. We have the capacity and we'll get the job done.

We have a big responsibility, but a tremendous opportunity, particularly at this time of the year, to welcome, as we always do, these refugees that come from the most horrible circumstances, and to bring them into the safety and security of this province. We have a committee across government that's working with our partners in civil society and in our public institutions to make sure that we get the job done right.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This Sunday, November 22, is National Housing Day. National Housing Day recognizes the importance of people having a home to call their own. Our government knows that stable, affordable housing can improve a person's health and their prospects for a good job and education. National Housing Day is an important time to reflect on how much more work we have in front of us, because the challenges are real and they are growing.

Access to affordable housing is a real issue in my riding in Davenport, and one that I often hear about in my constituency office. As housing costs rise, available affordable housing units decline and wait-lists for social housing continue to grow. I know that when I speak to many of the fantastic social housing organizations in Davenport, like the Perth Avenue co-op and the Tamil co-op, they are really feeling the pressure.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how is our government responding to the demands of affordable housing in our province?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the question. It's my interest as minister to ensure that affordable housing is understood as a crucial component of social infrastructure. To do that, we're having a number of conversations with the municipalities through AMO and other vehicles,

the private sector, and a number of agencies that are advocates for housing.

I'm proud that our government is committed to the goal of ending homelessness, which we arrived at by working with our expert panel. I'm also proud that Ontario is supporting the creation of 20,000 affordable rental housing units, more than 275,000 repairs and improvements, and providing rental and down payment assistance to over 90,000 households in need. We're also going to work with the federal government.

I look forward to presenting more about our long-term housing strategy very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I know the minister agrees that this year National Housing Day feels different from past years. Unfortunately, National Housing Day has historically served as a reminder that Canada is the only G8 country that lacks a national housing strategy.

1110

While I understand that you and your ministry staff work closely with our municipal partners and local service managers to flow funds from the Investment in Affordable Housing program, a comprehensive affordable housing strategy in Ontario really requires all levels of government to work collaboratively.

Now, with the new federal government, there is hope for a renewed and strengthened partnership that goes beyond this commitment to address the growing needs of our province. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what does the minister look forward to building with our new federal partners?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I look forward first and foremost to actually working with a federal government that gets it and is prepared to make a commitment to working not only with Ontario, but with all the provinces with respect to important issues to them.

We have started conversations, and we're proceeding with those. The new federal government has made some incredible commitments in the area of social infrastructure and urban infrastructure, something that's new to federal governments. We'll be working with them. Our shared sense of purpose is to achieve a sustainable supply of affordable housing and a fair system of housing assistance for those who need it most.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's freedom-of-information request revealed that not only did this government's Pan Am HOV lanes make motorists stew in hour-long traffic tie-ups that directly led to a 73% increase in accidents, but they made motorists pay \$3.2 million for that privilege. Minister, how do you justify the spending of \$3.2 million on accident-inviting, slap-dash, peel-and-stick HOV lane stickers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for that question. As I said to media yesterday, the transportation

plan for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games had a budget that was estimated to be \$61 million. After completing the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, in fact, we came in \$23 million below that \$61-million figure.

I think it's also important to stress, Speaker, that within that budget of \$61 million, we included resources to make sure that we appropriately signed and delineated where the temporary HOV lanes would be in place for the games. We were very happy to listen to law enforcement, one of our most important partners in the transportation plan, and we opened up the temporary HOV lanes for Pan Am/Parapan Am well in advance of the games, to give motorists and people visiting our region an opportunity to become accustomed to the change that would be coming.

I look forward to following up on this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, back to the minister: These were temporary lane markings that were quite literally flying away in the wind days after they were applied, due to the shoddy stick-on plan, and he bills taxpayers \$3.2 million. Will the minister at least acknowledge his \$3.2-million HOV rollout for the costly, traffic-tying debacle it was, before he doubles down and transforms HOVs into even more costly HOTs?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite, of course, for his follow-up. I just want to stress one more time—I'm not sure if members on that side of the House in the Conservative caucus heard exactly what I said in the first round, Speaker. Of course, I would only assume that they would want to have an opportunity to stand up and clap for the fact that the transportation budget came in \$23 million below the original estimate.

Speaker, even more important than that—as that member would know, because I believe he actually took the opportunity to attend a number of the venues and see the sporting events that were taking place—these were the most successful Pan Am/Parapan Am Games in history. More than one million tickets were sold. We had more than 1.4 million people attend Parapan Am and Pan Am celebrations at seven sites, including Panamania Live at Nathan Phillips Square, an Ontario celebration zone. Over the course of both games, more than 31 million Canadians tuned into radio and TV coverage of competitions, Speaker.

With our transportation plan, Speaker, we kept the region moving—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We're moving along nicely without some of the little interjections that are taking place.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question to the Acting Premier: Every Ontarian pays a debt retirement charge on their electricity bill to pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. The government keeps the amount of that debt a secret, but

we know it was being paid down at a rate of \$1.3 billion a year, and stood at \$2.6 billion in March 2014.

Simple math says that that debt should be almost paid off by now, but the Financial Accountability Officer showed that because the government is privatizing Hydro One, the residual stranded debt will increase and businesses will have to keep paying \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges.

Why must Ontario businesses pay \$600 million a year to subsidize the government's sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will know that we're actually accelerating the removal of the debt retirement charge from businesses by nine months. He also knows that it's already been accelerated starting at the end of this year for residential homeowners. He also knows that we've been very, very sensitive to creating mitigation measures for ratepayers across the province. He knows as well, particularly for businesses, that we have expanded the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which gives up to 50% off their bill if they're creating jobs new in the province or expanding their businesses, including businesses right across the province. We've also made available the ICI program for large industrial producers to many more businesses across the province, which takes 20% off their electricity bill.

We're very sensitive and we're very responsive to the business community with respect to rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, and you're still sticking them with an extra 600 million bucks a year for this.

At the rate the residual stranded debt was being paid down, it should nearly be paid off by now, but according to the Financial Accountability Officer, by selling Hydro One the government has made the debt bigger. If the government hadn't privatized Hydro One, it could have eliminated the debt retirement charge for everyone in 2016. Instead, business will keep paying \$600 million a year until 2018.

Why should Ontario businesses keep paying that \$600 million for the government's sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's understand what this is. We have a stranded debt, a legacy of the Harris government, which left \$21 billion on our books. We have since paid that down, even though the Harris government actually increased the amount of residual stranded debt throughout that period. It is going down; it has been going down continuously; we have outlined how it is.

More recently, a stranded debt of \$9.8 billion remains, and currently we are continuing to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll add you to the list. The member from Simcoe-Grey, the member from Lanark and the member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer indicated that as a result of the transaction

that we're putting forward, we will be able to provide an additional amount towards the residual stranded debt. We are now going to be able to provide certainty to businesses that we're going to do away with the residual stranded debt nine months earlier, notwithstanding the fact that stranded debt will continue, which will have to continue to be paid down by other sources.

The Financial Accountability Officer made it clear that as a result of the way it operates, it's never certain as to how much it will be, but we're making it certain.

MÉTIS NATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. On Monday, I had the pleasure of joining the minister and many other members of this House, including you, Mr. Speaker, to raise a flag for the Métis here at the Ontario Legislature in celebration of Louis Riel Day. Speaker, you spoke quite passionately about your Métis heritage and you spoke and said you were very proud to call yourself Métis. My good friend Stewart Kiff, who is known to so many of us in the House and is undergoing some personal challenges, is also very proud to call himself Métis.

In my own family, my father regularly spoke of Jerry Potts, the great Métis guide who helped lead the CN surveyors across the foothills of the mountains of the Rockies to build the CN railroad.

The minister, in his remarks on Monday, spoke at length about the significance of our government's strong relationship with Métis peoples.

Will the minister then tell us more about the significance and what we're doing to support Métis in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member from Beaches—East York for that question. The Métis are an important part of the richness of Ontario. When we observe Louis Riel Day on November 16 each year, we honour the distinct heritage of Métis communities in Ontario. They are recognized as one of our country's founding peoples and as one of the aboriginal peoples of Canada by the Constitution Act of 1982.

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They built a new culture, taking the traditions of First Nations and European fur traders to create something unique. Louis Riel Day is a time to recognize and respect the history, culture and identity of Métis people. We are grateful for their historic and their ongoing contributions to Ontario and Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I know all members of this House would congratulate the minister on the great work he's doing forging strong relationships with First Nation peoples in Ontario. It's great to hear that our government recognizes how significant the culture of the Métis people is to our shared history. I applaud the minister for doing such great work building those ties between the government and the Métis peoples. This was certainly reflected in the very warm reception that we all received on the south lawn on Monday.

The minister is often heard to say that when the aboriginal peoples of Canada prosper, Ontario prospers. I'm sure that is especially true and equally true for the Métis people. Speaker, will the minister tell us more about what his ministry is doing to create new opportunities for the Métis people in Ontario and our work to promote their distinct heritage?

Hon. David Zimmer: Last year, I had the privilege of renewing our government's commitment to the Métis Nation of Ontario by signing a new five-year framework agreement. The agreement sets out how we will work together over the next five years to improve the well-being of Métis children, families and their communities. We will do this by facilitating the recognition and advancement of Métis people in Ontario. We will provide a forum for discussion on matters of mutual concern. We will establish a coordinating committee which will identify priority activities on an annual basis to support the goals and objectives of the new agreement.

Together, we will continue working to build a successful, compassionate and united province, where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy the highest quality of life.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mrs. Gila Martow: In honour of today's francophone guests, I'm going to ask my question first in French and then in English.

Pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée : avec notre population croissante et vieillissante, le système de soins de santé public de l'Ontario est sous une énorme pression. Est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer comment il peut fournir les excellents soins de santé dont les résidents de l'Ontario ont besoin et qu'ils méritent en même temps qu'il coupe des postes de résidence en médecine et réduit les honoraires des médecins?

With our growing and aging population, Ontario's publicly funded health care system is under immense strain. Will the minister please explain how cutting residency spots and slashing physician fees will provide the top-notch health care that Ontario residents need and deserve?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate this question. It gives me the opportunity to speak about this important aspect of ensuring that we have the right mix and supply of physicians in this province to attend to Ontarians' health care needs.

It's important to state clearly that, since 2003, we've actually almost doubled the number of residency positions for physicians in this province from just over 600 to roughly 1,200 today. As a result of those investments, in fact, we're seeing tremendous progress where, this year alone, 700 net new doctors will be practising in this province. Our projections are that that growth rate of new doctors will be at three times the rate of population growth.

We felt that it was prudent, after doubling the number of residency spots in this province, that we actually use science and evidence and health resource modelling to determine what we should do going forward, and I'll speak to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer comment le gouvernement prévoit de fournir des soins de santé pour plus de résidents, pour le nombre croissant de personnes âgées et pour d'autres traitements avec ces augmentations inadéquates au budget global de la santé?

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how his government expects to provide health care for more residents, more seniors and more treatments with an inadequate budgetary increase to the global health care budget? Yes, we're seeing an aging population and newer treatments. It's not just about population growth; it's about those increased costs as well.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Just to finish off on the residency spots, we felt it was prudent, through health resource modelling going forward, to make sure that we have an adequate number of physicians and specialists; that we look at this. So we've made a modest reduction of less than 5% in the number of spots because of what we've been told by our epidemiologists and actuaries—everything to take into account precisely what the member opposite is referring to.

But the point, Mr. Speaker, is that we are continuing to invest in our health care system. Our health care budget went up this year, as it did last year, as it will next year, including the physician services component. We're also investing more in home care: \$250 million more that will benefit, generally speaking, our senior population. We're continuing to broaden the scope of our practice of our health care professionals so that they can do the hard work they do day in and day out, to make sure we're providing that highest quality of care to our seniors and to all Ontarians.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. The people of Hamilton are worried about a proposal to build a garbage gasification plant using unproven technology on Hamilton's waterfront. Instead of a full environmental assessment, the risky project only had an environmental screening, a much weaker process intended only for "projects that have predictable environmental effects that can be readily mitigated." That's ministry language, Speaker.

A year ago, I asked the minister to ensure that Hamiltonians have a full environmental assessment, to assure them that that environmental assessment would take place. A year has passed and the minister is still waffling over whether to elevate the environmental screening to a full EA. When will this minister finally decide that an experimental project of this nature and scale requires a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the member from Hamilton Centre's question. The law of Ontario—and I want to be very clear about this—does not allow, in the case of these types of bump-up requests, any involvement by the minister at all. These are director-level decisions, which I am prohibited from interfering in.

There was a huge volume of activity on this. The ministry received an overwhelming number of concerns articulated on that. I can't prejudice the process by expressing my views on this particular issue, because the director ultimately reports to the deputy minister and I can't interfere in that process.

I have been monitoring it very carefully, and I am assured by the ministry that they are near to making a decision on the bump-up request. I will do my job on behalf of this House to ensure that's not politically interfered with and that proper adjudicated due process takes place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is this government that watered down the requirements for an EA process on energy facilities. This company is gaming the system. They won't apply for a licence as a waste facility because a waste facility actually requires a full EA but an energy facility does not require a full EA. So this minister does have a responsibility to the people of Hamilton to make sure that a full environmental assessment is taking place on this waste facility, Speaker, as it should be.

I want to say very clearly that Hamilton city council has asked for a bump up to a full EA. The neighbourhood people want a full EA. Environment Hamilton has asked for a full EA. I personally have asked the minister to bump this up to a full EA. The bottom line is that an independent study showed that the screening process is not adequate for this kind of facility. Will this minister step up to the plate as the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and ensure that a full EA of this waste facility takes place in Hamilton?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I've been here for about five, six years, which probably puts me in the lower 25% of members with experience around here. I would expect that a member who's been longer than I would know the basic law of this Legislature, which she and I have to uphold. What she's asking me to do is legally impossible and illegal. If I went to try to bump up this request and interfere politically in the process—there is no legal basis for that. I'm accountable to the House to ensure that, as a minister of the crown, I support the law of the land. As a member of this assembly, I am responsible for being familiar with the law. Does the NDP want ministers to break the law and politically interfere in independent adjudicated processes of the public service?

1130

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Last night, I had the

pleasure of attending the opening reception for It's Never Okay: 2015 Summit on Sexual Violence and Harassment. Mr. Speaker, this was a remarkable event. I had an opportunity to meet with women and men who are working in the field of sexual violence, not only in Ontario but in fact from around the world. It was very encouraging to see colleagues there, including some members of the opposition who were there.

This summit was a commitment that was made in the sexual violence and harassment action plan, announced by the minister and the Premier in March of this year. Can the minister please inform this House of the goals of this summit?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the great question and for her hard work on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. I was pleased to be with her last night at the opening reception. I'm glad that she has connected with some familiar folks and some new contacts, as well, in this sector.

Speaker, there are well over 600 people at this summit, as we stand here today. They're registered to attend the summit, including members of our Roundtable on Violence Against Women and our Joint Working Group on Violence against Aboriginal Women. It also includes, I'm pleased to say, our new federal Minister of Status of Women, the Honourable Patty Hajdu from Thunder Bay.

There are so many more presenters and panelists who are in Toronto for this summit. We have people from across the country and across our nation, including from Ireland and New Zealand. So everyone's gathered together because they share a commitment to end—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer and for her hard work and that of her staff in putting this summit together. This summit is an opportunity for people who are working in the sexual violence sector to collaborate and share best practices with their colleagues. It's an important opportunity to hear about the innovative work that's going on with these different organizations. I know that many of these groups and these individuals have appeared before the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment and shared compelling testimony with us. Can the minister please explain the outcomes that she hopes to hear from the summit?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I want to thank the member for the question.

She's right; having people together from across the sector to hear the latest research and best practices is an incredible opportunity. We've organized speakers and sessions on best practices to end sexual violence and harassment, and to support survivors in the best and most appropriate ways. When the summit is over tomorrow, Speaker, we'll be positioned to continue the important work we've begun with the action plan, working even more closely with our partners in this sector.

I want to thank everybody who is attending the summit today and tomorrow. For those who were unable,

there are webcasts going on simultaneously so people can access the summit. Mainly, I want to thank people for their commitment to ending sexual violence and harassment, whether it's in homes, schools, our communities or our workplaces. Everyone will go back from the summit, I think, with strengthened capabilities and continued support for our survivors and victims.

PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I've asked about the horrendous murders in Renfrew county far too many times. The Attorney General couldn't say how many offenders are let go when they refuse to sign their probation orders or why crown attorneys aren't notified when this happens. The families of three innocent women have suffered because of the inadequate support for our over 800 probation and parole officers. The government is far too silent about the gaping holes in our criminal justice system.

This week, the minister said in the Legislature said that he cherishes the work of probation and parole officers, despite the fact that this government won't provide the resources to monitor the 51,000 released offenders. So, Mr. Speaker, how can the minister defend his empty words when this government's spending on monitoring offenders is the second lowest in the country?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first start by expressing, I think, all of our condolences to the family and friends in the communities of the victims. I've said this before: the events that took place in Renfrew county were shocking, brutal and disturbing.

As criminal charges have been laid and the police investigation is continuing, I cannot comment on any details of this case, and can only speak more generally. That is a point that I think everybody should be quite sensitive about, because we want justice to be served and police to be able to complete their work and the investigation that they're doing.

Everybody has the right to feel safe in their home and their communities. Ontario's probation and parole officers are committed to supervising offenders and holding offenders accountable. There is comprehensive pre-release planning that is undertaken before an offender is released from a correctional facility. I will provide more details in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question is about saving lives. What happened in Renfrew county was not just a tragedy; it was the depraved violence of a dangerous man.

It just doesn't make any sense why this government couldn't be more vigilant. We know that probation orders are enforceable whether or not they're signed, but it scares me to think what will happen when other offenders are let go and the resources for better monitoring just aren't there.

Bill 130, introduced by my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, is addressing part of that

issue, but the fact remains that the likelihood for very high-risk offenders to re-offend is more than 60%. When will the minister face Ontarians to say that's just not good enough, finally start supporting the needs of our probation officers and assessing high-risk offenders before they are released? Please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our probation and parole officers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our probation and parole officers work extremely hard. They develop community supervision plans for offenders that outline the types of programs and services that are required for their safer return to the community. In the community, ongoing monitoring and assessment tools are used to ensure that the offender can be safely managed in the community.

I fully recognize—we who are in public service all recognize—that there's always more work that can be done in reducing probation and parole officer caseloads and ensuring that our community is safe. That is why we are committed to supporting our probation and parole officers by working collaboratively through a joint working committee between the ministry and the union that represents our probation and parole officers and their workload.

I'm personally committed to continuing to work to make sure that women and all members of our community are safe at all times.

POVERTY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the minister for poverty reduction. Today a report by an Ontario-wide coalition of over 90 labour and community groups confirms what New Democrats have been warning about for years: that Ontario falls last in the pack of provinces when it comes to jobs, social programs and income equality. Ontario families are facing longer wait times for social housing and the highest daycare costs in Canada. Seniors still face some of the lengthiest wait times for long-term-care beds. Students have the highest debt and the least funding for post-secondary education.

What's worse is that this government has been in power for 12 years. When will this government accept responsibility for its policies and priorities that have left Ontario's most vulnerable behind?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am enormously proud of the work that we have done so far to address issues of poverty in this province. There is absolutely more to do, and that's why we, by legislation, have an ongoing commitment to poverty reduction.

I do want to remind the House and Ontarians that since the recession, we've created 590,600 jobs. The vast majority of those are full-time, and 77% are in industries that have above-average wages.

We've indexed the minimum wage; we've raised it from \$6.85 to \$11.25. It's the highest of any province in the country.

We are looking at and taking the precarious employment issue very seriously, and that's why our Minister of Labour is leading the Changing Workplaces Review.

Since 2003, social service spending has increased from \$8.3 billion to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: This government's priorities are loud and clear: We have the lowest social program spending per capita in the country; long-term unemployment is one of the worst in the country; precarious, low-wage work has ballooned to 8% more than in other provinces; and income disparity between the richest and the poorest Canadians has nearly doubled. Instead of focusing on these matters, the government is privatizing our public assets, driving up hydro costs and continuing to make life unaffordable for Ontario families.

Why won't this government admit that after 12 years, it has failed Ontarians who need help the most?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We introduced the Ontario Child Benefit. It has gone from zero to \$1,336 per child per year. Our child care funding has almost doubled. We've introduced full-day kindergarten so that four- and five-year-olds get that education, saving families \$6,500 a year on child care costs. We've increased per student funding. We're investing more in financial aid.

This government has done more on poverty reduction work than any government has ever done before. We are committed and remain committed. We will do more, but we must take pride in the work that we have done. For the member opposite to suggest that nothing has happened simply discourages those who are working very, very hard for a better Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Tomorrow is the United Nations' day of the child. I've often advocated in this assembly for greater children's safety and protective rights. In fact, it was the focus of my first private member's bill almost nine years ago. It would have, among other things, strengthened child protection legislation and enshrined into law a children's day in Ontario that would have been acknowledged today in this assembly.

Over the years, I have marvelled at those who have devoted their life to the protection and defence of children, like the late Les Horne and Agnes Samler of Defence for Children International, or Irwin Elman, our independent child advocate.

I'm even more in awe of parents who have lost their children, yet have given Ontarians the gift of child advocacy after their son or daughter has passed on. Allan Hubley and his wife Wendy, Sheri and Pat Leighton, Kathleen and Gord Stringer are all parents from my constituency who have joined me at Queen's Park to make a difference for our children after tragedies have taken the life of their child.

Recently, I've come to know Gabe and Stephanie Batstone, father and stepmother to a beautiful girl named Teagan. Blonde, blue-eyed and eight years old—Teagan's mother ended her life. There were many warning signs that could have prevented this heinous and unspeakable crime, and Gabe told me that the most significant included: a lack of coordinated services, a lack of in-depth expert analysis, opinion evidence in the form of untested affidavits and a focus on one parent's rights instead of the rights of the child. So he and Stephanie started Teagan's Voice to advocate for legislative changes to protect other children from the same tragic fate as Teagan. It is in that sentiment that I dedicate tomorrow's UN day of the child to sweet little Teagan Batstone and the child protection organization that bears her name.

I encourage members of this assembly and parents across Ontario to check out teagansvoice.com to learn how they can make child protection and safety in this province a priority.

THERESA FARAO

Mr. Taras Natshak: It is my honour to once again rise in this Legislature and to recognize something special in my riding of Essex. The Windsor-Essex United Way, in partnership with the labour movement, has worked tirelessly on community programming and fighting poverty. They provide funding and tremendous leadership in our region. I thank them for all that they do.

Each year, the United Way awards a local activist at the labour appreciation awards dinner with the Charles E. Brooks Labour Community Service Award. This will be the 38th year of this award and 2015 marks what would have been Charlie Brooks's 100th birthday.

This year's recipient is Theresa Farao. Theresa is an activist, a mentor and a feminist. Through her dedication, leadership and compassion, Theresa has made a positive impact on her community and the members of her union.

Theresa is the president of Unifor Local 240, and her volunteer history includes multiple fundraising activities on behalf of the Polar Bear Dip for Childcare, Heart and Stroke, Coats for Kids, Easter Seals, House of Sophrosyne, Hiatus House, Wellcome Centre and the walk for breast cancer.

Theresa has a passion for fairness. She has been a champion for pay equity in her workplace and her union for years. Theresa was successful in getting a recommendation passed at CAW council and again at Unifor Ontario council making pay equity a priority. Theresa's passion for fairness has caused her to fight against ha-

rassment, bullying and discrimination in our workplaces. At the same time, she understands the importance of building working relationships.

Congratulations, Theresa, on your nomination and your award of the Charles E. Brooks award. Your contribution has, indeed, made our community a fairer, more just place to live.

HATE CRIME

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Like many others, I was deeply troubled to learn of the horrific terrorist attacks in the days leading up to and including the events in Paris on November 13.

This past Saturday evening, the region's only mosque, in my neighbouring riding of Peterborough, suffered a fire. It is believed this fire was deliberately set in what I can only imagine was a hateful response by a select few who do not stand for the inclusion, peace and diversity of our country.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Peterborough has spoken against this by saying, "The fire set at the Kawartha Muslim Religious Association Masjid Al-Salaam mosque is a despicable act of hate that cannot be condoned in our community."

He goes on to say, "This behaviour in no way represents our community as a whole. Peterborough has always been and will continue to be a very diverse and inclusive region."

In spite of the incident, the Kawartha Muslim Religious Association has said, "We are deeply touched and highly encouraged by the overwhelming support we have received from the Peterborough community at large. We will continue to work with all faith groups and concerned citizens in raising awareness of peace and tolerance."

Mr. Speaker, as an immigrant myself, I hope I will never really understand the fear and turmoil that refugees are fleeing from. I have a profound appreciation for the opportunities to prosper, grow and raise my family here.

I echo the Premier's words that we must continue to strive for and pray for peace in our communities and throughout the world. We must guard against and resist the blame and generalizations that can lead to racism and hatred.

TARA CENOTAPH

Mr. Bill Walker: On November 11, as people across our communities, the province and country gathered at cenotaphs and Royal Canadian Legion halls to pay tribute to the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for peace, freedom and democracy, we were reminded of just how proud we are to live in Canada and to call Canada our home. We truly enjoy an Armed Forces and veterans who are the envy of the rest of the world.

On October 4, I attended a very special event in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It was the rededica-

tion of the community cenotaph, originally built in 1924, in the village of Tara. I was proud to be in good company: Nancy DeVries; Tom and Mabel Ruff of Tara, whose son Alex Ruff is a distinguished officer in our Armed Forces, having served a number of missions overseas; honorary lieutenant colonel to the regiment, Ivan Fenton; CFB Meaford Major Chris Beatty; Tara Legion members; Chesley high school teachers Ric Swigger and Don Matheson, and their students; along with a large turnout of residents, donors and businesses from the surrounding community.

The students—who had been to Vimy Ridge, Dieppe, Juno Beach, Ortona and Holland—made this ceremony a memorable one for the entire community.

In recognition of Canada's involvement in the liberation of Holland, a supply of 770 tulips has been provided by the Dutch government and will be planted by students to commemorate the 70th anniversary of our role in ending the Second World War. It will be a magnificent display in the spring, and one that again will fill our hearts with pride and honour in respect of the valour shown by our brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice, and their esteemed colleagues, the veterans in whose debt we shall forever be.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very fitting way to recognize and honour our brave sons and daughters who have in the past, and continue to serve and protect.

A big thank you to the great Canadian community of Tara, and to our troops, whom we continue to support, value and thank for their service and commitment, not just on Remembrance Day, but every day.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I just want to thank every member of this House who was part of the historic moment that happened. I know it was quickly eclipsed by the drama of question period, but today the largest jurisdiction in North America, for the first time ever, recognized the trans day of remembrance. Thank you to everyone for that.

I'm going to use my member's statement to tell us why we did that:

- one in five transgender individuals have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives;

- transphobia is experienced by 98% of the trans population—by the way, these are all from Trans Pulse—this wonderful study;

- 77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide, and 43% had attempted suicide;

- almost 50% of trans folk live in poverty, below the poverty line in Ontario;

- one in five trans Ontarians have been the target of physical or sexual assaults;

- one in five are unemployed.

Toby's Act—which, again, was an all-party movement to add gender identity and gender expression to the

Ontario Human Rights Code—was inspired by the death of the music director of our church, Toby Dancer.

On behalf of all of the legislators here, on behalf of all trans folk, and anyone really, Mr. Speaker, who cares about civil rights and human justice—I just want to say, on behalf of trans folk and their allies, thank you.

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POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Each year, on November 11, Polish people and Polish Canadians celebrate the national independence day of their homeland. Many of my constituents in Mississauga—Brampton South were part of those celebrations. I was fortunate to join some of them at St. Maximilian Kolbe parish on November 9 in my riding. While on November 11 the world celebrates Remembrance Day, I learned more about the struggle of the Polish people as they emerged from partition by foreign powers, and later communism, to become a free and democratic society.

Freedom from tyranny and war is something that people in our own society may appreciate, but perhaps we do not know enough about the sacrifices made by others to make that freedom possible. While November 11 may be solemn, for Polish people it is also a celebration of their culture and independence.

I wish to offer my congratulations to constituents of Polish descent in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South and to the Polish people all around the world on this important date.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last week I was pleased to be joined by my colleague the member from York-Simcoe, and together we went across the riding of Huron-Bruce to host discussions on small business. These round tables focused on the growing concerns of local businesses and the steps the province should take to help them out. In our discussions, the rising cost of electricity, to no one's surprise, was a recurring theme.

For one local economic development officer, it was a concern that she heard from small businesses time and again. She shared, specifically, a story of a local business owner who was forced to close their storefront because the heating was just too expensive. Without a doubt, business suffers from electricity rates that are among the highest in North America.

Another major concern that was expressed and brought forward was excessive red tape. Small businesses, such as a family-run store and operation, have neither the time nor the resources to jump through endless hoops. We heard first-hand examples of this. Speaker, I was very disappointed to hear of one particular business owner who waited 14 months for his application to be processed by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. For these businesses, every minute

spent filling out paperwork is one diverted from doing what is needed to live, work and raise a family.

There were also concerns expressed and subsequent discussions regarding the increase in minimum wage, lack of skilled trades, ORPP, and the need to foster innovation.

In Huron-Bruce, the small business is truly big business. It is the heart of our communities, our culture and our local economy, and we should be cultivating a culture of opportunity.

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE STAFF

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to take a moment today to thank my community office staff for their hard work and dedication to their jobs. Rahmat, Hillary and Aliya work tirelessly to help people in our community and do their best to ensure that every person who contacts our office receives the support they need.

I'd like to read a thank-you message written by a woman who recently came to our office for assistance: "Last week I arrived at your office asking for help. Your team responded in a most courageous way. My friend is dying and I was in distress. Everyone was kind and sensitive to my needs. I kept saying, 'I want you to fix this problem.' They gave me what I needed—someone who would listen. We are so grateful for all" of their support.

This is only one example of the caring work that Rahmat, Hillary and Aliya perform on a daily basis, and I thank them for it.

Mr. Speaker, I know that, in our members' community offices throughout the province, the care I have just described happens every day. Our staff welcome people in our offices when we can't. They hold a genuine interest in helping the people that they serve. They are the backbone back home in our ridings. Their words and actions help make our communities better places to live, and I want to thank not just my staff but the staff in offices across the province.

ALBANIAN CANADIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House to speak about the Albanian Canadian Community Association in my riding of York South-Weston. Immigration to Canada began in the early 20th century, and today there are over 28,000 Albanian Canadians in Ontario. This community has made and continues to make important contributions to the growth and prosperity of the province of Ontario.

November is a significant month for the Albanian community. Each year, people of Albanian origin celebrate the Albanian declaration of independence, which declared Albania an independent sovereign nation on November 28, 1912. That is why I will be introducing a bill later to declare November as Albanian Heritage Month in Ontario.

Albania also commemorates liberation day, which is the day that Albania was liberated from Nazi Germany's forces after the Albanian resistance on November 29, 1944.

The Albanian Canadian Community Association has supported the community for 25 years, since November 4, 1990. The association commemorates the history and celebrates the rich traditions of Albanian heritage and should be proud of the work that they do. I would like to thank Dr. Ruki Kondaj in particular for her tireless work and dedication to the Albanian Canadian community through her work as honorary president of the association.

I believe it's important to remember our heritage. I feel an affinity to this community, not only because of my last name but also because of similarities with my own heritage.

Congratulations to all Canadians of Albanian heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALBANIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ALBANAIS

Mrs. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 145, Loi

proclamant le mois de novembre Mois du patrimoine albanaise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: November is a significant month for the Albanian community. By proclaiming the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month, our province would recognize the meaningful contributions Albanian Canadians have made in building Ontario's communities and the social, economic, political and cultural achievements of Albanian Canadians throughout the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Motions? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here that reads "Save Our Northern Health Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas government cuts have a direct impact on patient care and front-line workers;

"Whereas hospital base operating budgets have been frozen for four years in a row and hospital global funding increases have been set below the rate of inflation since 2008, meaning that hospital budgets have been cut in real dollar terms ... for eight years in a row;

"Whereas Ontario government funding figures show that home care funding per client is less today than it was in 2002;

"Whereas Ontario hospital funding is the lowest in Canada;

"Whereas Ontario ranks eighth out of 10 provinces in hospital funding as a percentage of provincial GDP; and

"Whereas the government has actually refused to acknowledge that service cuts are happening;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately stop cuts and freezes to hospital budgets;

"To immediately cease the laying off of nurses and other front-line workers; and

"To fund hospitals adequately to ensure highest quality patient care across the province."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Aislin to deliver to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government" to date "to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to Jack to bring to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension

plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it down with page Alex.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Michael Mantha: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

“We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Brooke to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.”

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health

measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve.”

As I am in agreement, I will affix my signature and give it to page Lauren.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai des centaines de pétitions qui m'ont été données pour demander une Université de l'Ontario français. Ça dit :

« Entendu que ... le 10 février » de 2015 « le RÉFO, l'AFO et la FESFO ont présenté le rapport du Sommet

provincial des États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français;

« Entendu que le rapport a indiqué un besoin et un désir pour une université de langue française;

« Entendu que le 26 mai, 2015 la députée France Gélinas a présenté un projet de loi pour créer cette université;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit : de commencer la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français dès que possible. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais y ajouter mon nom, et je demande à la page Hannah de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this important petition. I will sign my name to it and hand it to page Taylor.

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HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to health care, coming from constituents from Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it reads:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve.”

I have signed this petition in support.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year.” That one year is up next week. We're looking forward to it.

I agree with this petition, and I wholeheartedly put my name to it and present it to page Megan to bring down to the Clerks' table.

MAIL DELIVERY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, it gives me great pleasure to bring a petition to restore Canada Post door-to-door mail delivery.

“Whereas replacing door-to-door mail delivery with community mailboxes would have a big impact on our

senior citizens, less able-bodied citizens and parents with young children;

"Whereas it would be difficult for residents with strollers, wheelchairs or walkers to obtain their mail from community mailboxes in adverse weather conditions (especially through snow);

"Whereas residents in dense, urban communities are concerned about the safety and accommodation of larger mailboxes on busy streets;

"Whereas residents feel that receiving packages through the mail would become much more difficult because there would be limited package compartments in community mailboxes.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encourage the government of Canada to require Canada Post to continue door-to-door mail delivery, specifically in urban, downtown communities."

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature—and bring this wonderful petition to the Legislature.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to establish the Université de l'Ontario français / Projet de loi 104, Loi constituant l'Université de l'Ontario français.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'aimerais commencer par remercier bien des gens. Je vais aller assez rapide : du côté du RÉFO, on a Alain Dupuis, Christopher Karas, Dominique Montpetit, Emily Rost, Éric Desrochers, Falonne Shimba, Fernando Luna Cesar, Isabelle Lepage, Josée Joliat, Léonie Tchataf, Lucas Egan, ainsi que Myriam Tardif et Odette Nindagiye.

Du côté de la FESFO, nous avons Alexandre Black, Geneviève Latour, Hannah Beaulieu et Jérémie Spadafora.

J'aimerais remercier mes conférenciers qui étaient avec moi pour la conférence de presse : Éric Desrochers, Lucas Egan et, bien entendu, Milena Oliva—and bien d'autres : Christian Robert, Dara Tai, Daryia Arzani, Denis Beslimov, Divine Ntumba Kalama et Élise Slater. Nous avons Jeremy Young, John-Alex Duff-Wilson, Julie Lutete, Lucie Atangana, Luis Pereira, Marcel Kalala Lukuta, ainsi que Patrisha DeMille, Paul Dupré, Sébastien Duff-Maillouw, Simon Edmond et Simone Helston. Aussi, je crois que j'ai vu Stewart Kiff, qui est ici également—oui; merci, Stewart, d'être venu—and Tiana Crosbie.

Je voulais prendre un moment pour présenter tous ces gens parce que c'est eux, vraiment, qui ont aidé à mettre ce projet de loi de l'avant.

Aujourd'hui, l'Ontario a l'opportunité de faire un pas sur le chemin qui nous amènera vers une nouvelle université pour et par les francophones. Aujourd'hui, nous allons non seulement débattre de ce projet de loi, mais nous allons également voter pour ce projet de loi qui créera une nouvelle institution d'enseignement universitaire.

Le projet de loi s'inspire de tout le travail qui a été fait par le RÉFO, par la FESFO et par l'AFO durant les dernières années et qui s'est conclu avec le sommet sur l'éducation postsecondaire.

Nous avons dû travailler fort pour avoir des écoles primaires, puis des écoles secondaires, pour les francophones. Après plusieurs années, nous avons réussi à avoir nos conseils scolaires pour les écoles primaires et secondaires, et plusieurs de celles-ci offrent également des garderies pour nos tout-petits.

Il y a un peu plus de 20 ans, nous avons eu les collèges francophones, comme le Collège boréal et La Cité collégiale, qui sont encore ici.

Nous sommes présentement sur le chemin pour compléter le système d'éducation et mettre en place notre Université de l'Ontario français.

Je dois dire un gros merci également au commissaire aux services en français. Lorsqu'en juin 2012 il a publié son rapport spécial d'enquête intitulé L'état de l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française dans le Centre-Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario : Pas d'avenir sans accès, il est devenu clair et il avait conclu que les possibilités limitées d'études postsecondaires en français, les longues

distances et l'autonomie fragile de certains établissements affaissent les efforts de recrutement et de rétention, entraînant dès lors une perte pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. Je lui dis merci.

Aujourd'hui, les néo-démocrates veulent une Université de l'Ontario français. C'est clair; c'est net; c'est précis.

Comment on fait pour se rendre là? Ça, c'est un peu moins clair. Aujourd'hui, nous allons encourager l'Assemblée législative à prendre le prochain pas. Je vous ai parlé des consultations qui ont eu lieu dans les quatre coins de la province—des états généraux—and qui a suivi un document synthèse qui a été déposé avec le gouvernement.

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La réponse du gouvernement, disons que c'est un silence. J'ajouterais que c'est un silence gênant. Pour être complètement transparent, le ministère des Collèges et Universités ainsi que la ministre déléguée aux services en français ont émis un communiqué de presse conjoint suite au dépôt du rapport, mais le communiqué ne dit pas grand-chose. Donc, aujourd'hui, j'espère que pendant la période de débats on pourra en apprendre plus sur la position des différents partis politiques en Ontario face à l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Si on n'en a pas entendu beaucoup du côté des libéraux à date, eux, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, en ont beaucoup à dire. Entre autres, plus de 2 200 personnes ont soumis une demande d'admission. Ça, c'est 2 200 personnes qui ont quelque chose à dire. L'université n'existe pas encore, mais on a 2 200 inscriptions déjà. Ce qu'ils sont en train de nous dire au travers de ce processus-là, c'est qu'ils veulent qu'on fasse le premier pas.

Le premier pas, c'est clair. C'est de mettre en place un conseil de gouverneurs transitoire. Donc, ce sera déjà le conseil de transition qui sera là pour établir des liens avec l'université francophone existante, parce qu'il faut se souvenir qu'on a une université francophone à Hearst; mon collègue de Timmins-James Bay me le rappelle régulièrement. Ils auront également des liens avec les universités bilingues ou celles qui offrent des services en français. Il faut reconnaître que l'Université Laurentienne, l'Université d'Ottawa et le Collège Glendon à York, toutes ces universités, offrent des services en français. On a également nos collèges, le Collège Boréal et La Cité collégiale. Ces gens pourront établir des liens. Ils pourront faire des recommandations—and ça, c'est une recommandation que bien des gens attendent—sur les sites. On en entend beaucoup parler.

Pour ceux qui ont participé aux états généraux, c'est clair que les gens qui ont participé à cet exercice voudraient voir un campus principal à Toronto avec des campus satellites dans le Nord, dans le Sud-Ouest et dans l'Est. Pour les gens qui viennent de se joindre à ce projet, qui sont excités par la possibilité d'avoir une Université de l'Ontario français, ces gens-là, disons qu'ils sont moins précis par rapport. Mais ce serait quand même au conseil de gouverneurs transitoire à décider. Il y a des étudiants potentiels dans toutes les régions de l'Ontario,

donc on aimerait que tout le monde y ait accès comme le commissaire aux services en français nous l'avait dit.

Obtenir une gouvernance universitaire pour et par les Franco-Ontariens, c'est d'avoir un établissement pour lequel on gère tous les leviers. Donc, la gestion inclurait les programmes, c'est certain, mais inclurait également l'administration, les finances, la vie étudiante, les activités académiques, la recherche, tout ça pour et par les francophones. Bien entendu, on parle du corps professoral, des étudiants, des services de l'admission, etc.

Les étudiants et étudiantes parlent haut et fort. Ils veulent un milieu universitaire francophone, un milieu où on est garanti qu'il n'y aura pas d'assimilation. Plusieurs d'entre eux ont fait toute leur école primaire et secondaire en français et maintenant se retrouvent avec le choix déchirant de soit faire face à l'assimilation dans une université anglophone ou même bilingue, ou de devoir s'exiler pour venir à bout de faire des études universitaires en français. Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes devraient pouvoir étudier en français dans leur province sans avoir à déménager.

Donc, ça c'est ce qu'on veut. On veut voir la mise sur pied d'une université de langue française avec un mandat provincial, avec des campus régionaux coordonnés qui peuvent offrir une formation généraliste, mais également la formation spécialisée dans les régions appropriées selon la demande. Ils veulent une université faite sur mesure pour l'Ontario français, centrée sur la transmission et la création du savoir, qui forme des travailleurs, des penseurs, des créateurs et des citoyens pouvant contribuer au rayonnement de l'Ontario français et de la province dans son entier. Ils veulent un établissement qui offrira une formation de qualité, qui constituera un milieu de vie social en français, et ils expriment également qu'ils veulent être ouverts aux gens pour qui le français n'est pas la langue principale.

La langue française joue en Ontario un rôle historique honorable depuis plus de quatre siècles. On vient de fêter nos 400 ans. La Constitution lui reconnaît le statut de langue officielle au Canada, et le français est reconnu en Ontario comme langue officielle en éducation. De plus, la Constitution reconnaît à la communauté franco-ontarienne le droit à la gestion scolaire. Nous gérons présentement un réseau de 450 écoles primaires et secondaires, 12 conseils scolaires et deux collèges communautaires en français. Les Ontariens et Ontariennes d'expression française n'ont cependant qu'un accès limité à des programmes postsecondaires en français.

Je crois que mes collègues dans les trois partis reconnaissent l'apport du patrimoine culturel des francophones à l'Ontario et désirent le sauvegarder pour les générations à venir. Il est en effet dans l'intérêt social et économique de la province d'améliorer l'accès aux programmes postsecondaires en français dans toutes les régions de notre province. La création d'une université de langue française en Ontario est donc une étape logique et souhaitable qui permettrait à la communauté franco-ontarienne de disposer de tous les établissements

scolaires nécessaires à son épanouissement, à sa pérennité et à son rayonnement.

Les buts de l'université : offrir des programmes de premier cycle et de cycles supérieurs qui sont innovateurs; de favoriser un apprentissage, un enseignement, une recherche et un exercice professionnel de langue française qui soient de la plus haute qualité; de contribuer à l'avancement de la communauté franco-ontarienne; d'être une université qui est gérée et administrée en français et que tous les services soient disponibles dans cette langue; de promouvoir l'Ontario à l'échelle nationale et internationale en mettant l'accent en particulier sur les contributions économiques et culturelles de la communauté franco-ontarienne; de faciliter les échanges avec les éducateurs anglophones et allophones de l'Ontario afin de leur donner l'occasion de s'immerger dans un milieu scolaire universitaire de langue française; et de permettre aux étudiants francophones venant de régions éloignées ou de familles à faible revenu de faire des études universitaires en français.

Nous avons cette opportunité, cet après-midi, de faire un pas. Est-ce que c'est le pas qui nous amène au fil d'arrivée? Bien sûr que non. Le chemin sera encore long, mais avec tous les jeunes que l'on a ici avec nous aujourd'hui et avec tous les gens qui sont prêts à nous aider sur ce chemin, je me sens confiante que l'Ontario est prêt à faire ce pas aujourd'hui : non seulement d'en discuter de façon positive, mais également de voter pour que ce projet de loi passe sa deuxième lecture.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président, et je remercie tous ceux qui se sont déplacés aujourd'hui pour être avec nous pour ce débat important, un débat historique. Merci.

Le Président Suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mme Marie-France Lalonde: I'm actually very happy to rise this afternoon to speak on behalf of my community of Ottawa–Orléans and mostly on behalf of my constituents on the bill brought forward by my colleague across the floor.

En tant que Franco-Ontarienne, ce projet de loi que Mme Gélinas a proposé me tient vraiment à cœur. Comme vous le savez, ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans comprend la plus grande population de francophones à l'intérieur de la grande région d'Ottawa. Je comprends les enjeux des jeunes francophones en Ontario, spécialement en ce qui a trait à l'enseignement postsecondaire en français. C'est pourquoi je suis tout à fait en appui du projet de loi 104.

Our students deserve programs that help them to succeed. For francophone students across the province, that means having access to undergraduate and post-graduate studies in the official language of their choice.

Le français est une langue avec un statut spécial en Ontario, tout comme le droit à l'instruction en français. C'est donc dans notre intérêt, comme Ontariens et Ontariennes, de promouvoir et d'assurer la vitalité de la langue française.

French is already recognized as an official language in the courts and in primary and secondary education. We

have well-established French schools, school boards and two French community colleges, including La Cité, which has their trades and skills school located in my riding. Mais pour notre jeunesse francophone qui se retrouve dans des régions plus éloignées, soit à Sudbury ou dans l'est de l'Ontario, par exemple, leur choix est plus limité.

I have to say that living in Ottawa, we know how privileged our youth are in regard to accessibility to French services as well as French education.

1350

Nous devons aussi reconnaître l'apport de l'Université d'Ottawa comme institution bilingue offrant d'excellents programmes en français.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à fournir à nos étudiants et étudiantes une diversité de programmes et de services en français à travers la province.

We continue to promote the success of our Franco-Ontarian youth through targeted investments. In 2014-15, our government invested nearly \$90 million to support French-language post-secondary education, an increase of 75% since we came into office.

En travaillant sur ce projet, le ministre Moridi a eu l'opportunité de parler plusieurs fois—et la ministre Meilleur—with the Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, pour discuter de la possibilité d'une université gouvernée par et pour les francophones.

Je dois dire que j'ai eu l'honneur—l'immense plaisir, aussi—de rencontrer ces groupes à plusieurs reprises depuis la dernière année. J'ai également eu le plaisir de les rencontrer dans mon bureau en août dernier et, tout récemment, dans les dernières deux semaines. Je dois dire qu'on est fiers, forts et dynamiques au niveau de la jeunesse francophone en Ontario.

Je suis fière de notre héritage linguistique et j'ai eu le plaisir d'entendre leurs idées au sujet de l'éducation universitaire en français. Je dois dire que c'était, bien, un plaisir pour moi d'avoir leur apport et leurs contributions. Je veux remercier et féliciter ces groupes d'étudiants qui sont ici pour leur engagement face à ce projet et surtout pour leurs contributions à notre communauté francophone en Ontario.

Je me réjouis de l'initiative du gouvernement actuel d'avoir mis en place le Plan d'action pour l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française dans le Centre et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario. Ce plan a permis la création d'un comité consultatif composé de 13 membres, qui permet à certains représentants des groupes étudiants, comme le RÉFO et la FESFO, d'être représentés et d'avoir une voix forte afin de protéger et de renforcer l'éducation postsecondaire en français.

The 13 members of this advisory committee include student group representatives as well as experts from the post-secondary sector, business, immigration, continuing education and health.

Cette initiative est une des plusieurs étapes comprises dans le plan d'action de l'Ontario pour améliorer et

élargir l'accessibilité des programmes scolaires en français pour la région centrale et celle du sud-ouest ontarien.

This is one of several steps taken as part of Ontario's action plan to make French-language programming more accessible in central and southwestern Ontario.

Notons que plus d'un tiers de la population francophone de la province habite dans ces deux régions spécifiques.

Under this plan, \$14 million has been specifically allocated to create 16 new French-language programs in central and southwestern Ontario, an area that is especially lacking in such programs at present.

The final report from the advisory committee on French-language post-secondary education is expected in the spring. Their work, which has been ongoing since January 2014, will bring additional insight and recommendations for facing the challenges associated with expanding French-language educational offerings.

Ce sont non seulement les étudiants et étudiantes qui bénéficieront d'une université francophone, mais aussi l'essor de la francophonie ontarienne dans son ensemble.

Comme gouvernement, il faut toujours trouver des façons de permettre le développement maximal de nos jeunes et ainsi tenter de leur donner les meilleures conditions pour contribuer à notre économie. Nos employeurs ont besoin de travailleurs qualifiés et nos diplômés veulent trouver un emploi où ils pourront performer et vivre leur francophonie. C'est clair qu'une université de langue française contribuera non seulement culturellement mais aussi économiquement à la province.

I look forward to seeing the impact a dedicated French-language university can have in Ontario. I truly believe the creation of this establishment will hugely enhance the francophone community, from students and their families, to researchers and professors to employers.

Nous, ici, collectivement, en Chambre, partageons des objectifs communs, et notre fierté franco-ontarienne nous amène à défendre des causes ensemble afin d'assurer, de promouvoir et surtout de faire rayonner la francophonie en Ontario et, ce qui peut importer le plus, dans nos activités.

En conclusion, l'essentiel dans ce projet de loi est de continuer à préserver et à développer nos institutions en Ontario afin de donner à nos jeunes les outils nécessaires pour qu'ils deviennent une force économique pour notre province.

Ceci signifie que nous devons travailler ensemble afin de garantir le meilleur accès possible à l'éducation postsecondaire en français pour notre jeunesse francophone. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The member for Thornhill.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci beaucoup. Je m'excuse, mais je perds ma voix un petit peu aujourd'hui, alors j'espère que vous pouvez m'entendre un peu.

Une voix.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci beaucoup. Premièrement, je souhaite la bienvenue à tous les délégués qui sont ici de

la communauté francophone. Ils sont ici cet après-midi pour appuyer la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 104 de ma collègue de Nickel Belt pour la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Nous avons des délégués qui représentent des organismes francophones très différents à travers toute la province—j'espère qu'ils sont tous de bons amis—pour parler pas seulement avec nous autres, mais avec toutes les communautés pour voir l'intérêt pour une université francophone ici en Ontario.

Des communautés visiteuses et organismes qui sont ici, on a le RÉFO, le Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien. C'est l'organisme porte-parole des 22 000 étudiants et étudiantes qui poursuivent des études postsecondaires en français ici en Ontario. On a aussi l'AFO, l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; et la FESFO, ce qui veut dire la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne. C'est l'organisme porte-parole des 25 000 jeunes francophones ici en Ontario. Ils ont une voix très, très forte, comme avait dit ma collègue de la circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans. Alors, bienvenue ici à la législature de l'Ontario.

Je vais parler un petit peu aussi en anglais.

I have a study from the Conference Board of Canada that states that the province is losing enormously by not investing in a university system managed by and for francophones. According to the Conference Board of Canada, investment in Quebec and New Brunswick governments in the bilingual population increases access for these provinces to foreign markets and leads to additional economic benefits of up to several billion dollars. More specifically, and I'm quoting from the study, "In 2011, exports from Quebec and New Brunswick to French-speaking countries were two times more than would be expected considering their share of overall Canadian exports. The difference is even more marked with imports: Quebec and New Brunswick import from French-speaking countries two and a half times what they should given their share of Canadian imports overall. This indicates that the eight other provinces are doing much less trade with francophone countries in proportion to their share of Canadian global trade."

Obviously we need to have strong, educated francophone community members across Canada, not just here in Ontario, who can advocate and travel the world and develop those trade agreements and work for companies that do trade with other companies, and to develop and open up those markets. Certainly we see that happening in the provinces with the numbers of students who have more than just high-school and elementary-school French. In order to do that sort of international trade work, you have to have language skills from post-secondary and university-level programs.

I'm going to just say that en français : l'étude du Conference Board du Canada souligne que la province perd énormément en n'investissant pas dans un système universitaire géré par et pour les francophones. Selon le Conference Board du Canada, l'investissement des gouvernements québécois et néo-brunswickois dans le

bilinguisme de leur population augmente l'accès de ces provinces aux marchés étrangers et mène à des retombées économiques supplémentaires pouvant atteindre plusieurs milliards de dollars.

1400

Je veux parler un petit peu au sujet des francophones ici en Ontario.

I want to say a few things about francophones here in Ontario; these are just a few facts for everybody to absorb. Among the 13.5 million people living in Ontario, 1.4 million speak French, which is over 10%; 611,500 of them identify as francophones; 42.2% of francophones live in eastern Ontario, 35.7% in southern Ontario and 22.1% in northern Ontario; by 2025, half of all francophones in Ontario will live in southern Ontario; 60% of francophones are born in Ontario; 14% are born outside of Canada, mainly Europe and Africa.

Part of the support from this side of the House for a francophone university is that there's a lot of talk about increasing francophone immigration. But one of the keys for immigrants—we see it between the United States and Canada—is that if somebody goes to university in another country, there's a pretty darned good chance they are going to stay there. They meet somebody, they make friends, they get comfortable, they do some part-time work and they make connections in the community.

It's a fantastic way for us to boost francophone immigration in Ontario, which we all keep talking about and supporting, but it doesn't quite seem to be happening. The target is to increase francophone immigration to 5% of new immigrants who would be from francophone countries and able to at least work to a reasonable degree and converse to a reasonable degree in French and contribute to all the francophone communities we have in Ontario.

Up in York region, in the riding of Thornhill, we have l'AFRY, l'Association des francophones de la région de York. Mona Babin was the « directrice », and now her friend Valérie is taking over. Alain Beaudoin is the president. They have fantastic events and a fantastic summer program for students. We cannot keep that level growing without francophone university students. In fact, some people have even said to me, “There's a lot of francophone universities in Quebec, and if our francophone students want to go to a francophone university, they could just go to Quebec.”

That brings us right back to what I said about immigration. If our francophone students go to Quebec, they might decide to stay in Quebec. That's not what the francophone communities here want to see. They don't want to see their young people moving outside the province for university, not to return. I think we actually want to do the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We want to have francophone students from Quebec come to Ontario and maybe settle here, and this is definitely one way to do it. So it's not just about a francophone university.

Ce n'est pas seulement une discussion au sujet d'une université. On devrait parler un peu de la qualité des programmes dans cette université. Est-ce que c'est

quelque chose pour étudier pour devenir médecin ou dentiste, ou est-ce que c'est seulement un programme des sciences sociales? J'espère qu'on peut en parler un peu. Peut-être qu'on peut avoir des programmes pour travailler au gouvernement, parce qu'on voit qu'on a besoin de personnes ici, des Ontariens et Ontariennes, qui peuvent non seulement parler en français mais écrire des choses dont on a besoin—des « press releases ».

I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker. There's the question of what kind of programs and what kind of quality a francophone university would have. Obviously it would have to start small, but my suggestion would be to consider having programs that would help those of us here who are working in government—you know, as somebody who is not francophone—je suis francophile. But we're always looking, in all levels of government in this province, for people who have the necessary skills, who can write articles, who can do press releases in French and not merely have a bit of French-language skills. Maybe it's something we can work on to have an internship, un programme de stage. Somehow there could be some kind of co-operation between those of us who are elected officials and have students from a francophone university spend time interning in our offices. We could be part of that program and a part of that solution, because we see that in the medical professions. You don't just go to university and get the degree. Some of the greatest programs have the best internships. Obviously, doctors have to practise in hospitals and clinics. As an optometrist, I had to work in a clinic for two years. We also see the co-op programs that are so successful.

So my personal opinion is that I would really like to see some type of work/school program that would help us for purely selfish reasons. We all are often looking for staff not just in our offices but in the ministries and in so many areas in the government—if we want to continue to be a true shining light of francophone communities in Canada, not just, “Oh, yes, Ontario also has francophone communities.”

I'm going to end by saying that on that level, my nephew, Eden, est étudiant à l'école secondaire le Collège français, ici à Toronto, au niveau 11. Il venait souvent pour m'aider à traduire, « translate », mes notes en français. He was born to a mother who grew up, like I did, in an English suburb in Montreal. She went to a French university in Quebec City and then she did, at the Sorbonne in Paris, a master of education, and she made a big effort to speak to her little baby son in French. He went on to go to a French-only school—not French immersion but French-only school. I have to say, now, when he speaks English, he sometimes has a French accent. Merci beaucoup à Eden Gladstone pour m'avoir aidé. Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup à tous les étudiants qui sont venus.

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Bonjour et merci, monsieur le Président. As an anglophone, I actually represent a riding that is designated bilingual under the French Language

Services Act. I can tell you that Welland and Port Colborne, which are part of my riding, embrace the French culture.

While I was la mairresse of the city, we developed French signage in an area known as “French Town” in our community. We also developed a bilingual flag which flies proudly in our city, and we’re proud members of AFMO, the association of French municipalities of Ontario. I can tell you that it is very important to our community, and I’m sure my community would support the development of an independent French university.

Some 1.7 million francophones live in Ontario, but only under 600,000 actually speak French in their homes today. Part of that is the incomplete transmission of the French language by parents to their children in the home, but the other part of it is the fact that once you get past high school, the opportunities to actually go on to university or college are limited, if you want to study strictly in French.

I just want to spend a couple of minutes talking about the erosion of French-language services under the act in my own riding. As a nurse in the Welland County General Hospital, before it became part of the Niagara Health System, where they brought eight hospitals together and closed three of those sites, we used to offer French services in our hospital. We offered French lessons to our nurses and to our health care workers. We translated documents—patient teaching documents and surveys—into the French language, but that has all gone by the wayside under the Niagara Health System.

When I contacted the Niagara Health System, after I spoke to the French Language Services Commissioner about this issue, basically what they said was—I asked for the documents that actually supported their programs—that they were non-existent, and when we talked to them about it, they said they would do their best, and that purchased services are available in the public domain to provide French services. Well, that isn’t enough.

1410

It’s not acceptable to expect families to actually pay for French services when the government is mandated to do it. Closing the Welland site of the Niagara Health System, which is proposed by this government, is going to further erode those French-language services for a community that has a 15% French population.

I have to actually sit down now because my time is up, but merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It’s a pleasure and an honour to be able to speak on this bill here today. I want to first start by talking about my experience in my local community in regard to the French and the francophone culture.

When I campaign, I knock on doors and I talk to people. It’s quite often I meet someone who’s from a francophone diaspora, who has come to Canada, or someone who’s been here for quite some time. I think it’s my last name that kind of activates the conversation, and

they say, “Oh, Michel Coteau, how are you?” We have a bit of a conversation. It always surprises me how many francophones would live in a place like Don Valley East. Our francophone culture is very large across the province of Ontario.

I know that, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in my previous portfolio, I had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people throughout the community when we were bringing through the immigration act that set a 5% target for francophone immigration here in the province of Ontario. I remember the conversations we had around small towns in Ontario that were established by francophones and some anglophones many years ago.

All throughout Ontario, the francophone history in Ontario is a long history. If you go back to the early settlement of Europeans in this region, you’ll find that there’s always been a strong francophone presence in Ontario. People are often surprised when you say that Ontario has the second-largest francophone population in Canada. Sometimes people think it’s New Brunswick, but it is Ontario, again, with several hundred thousand francophones.

I know that there’s a strong demand for French-based education in this province. If you look at Toronto, for example, while I was a school board trustee, we had a massive expansion of French immersion. I believe at the Toronto District School Board currently there’s roughly 20,000—I could be wrong with the number, but the last time I checked, it’s roughly 20,000 students who are in French immersion. In fact, my two daughters go to a French immersion school. It’s one of the three at the public board that is fully French immersion. They’re not introduced to English, I think, until grade 4. The demand at that school continues to grow and grow. It’s a real issue for that school because they’ve run out of space. There’s so much demand.

I think that this type of a response to a demand is—looking at other academic institutions that would be able to support the growing demand here in Ontario would be quite good. I think that looking for ways to support any type of education attached to francophone and French learning in the province of Ontario is great. That’s why I’m so glad that Madeleine Meilleur has been looking at ways to bring people together to look at this initiative for expansion.

I think I’ve gone over my time so I’m going to sit down now, but I have so much more to say on this topic. If I’m given another opportunity, I’ll speak a bit more on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s my honour to rise today to speak in support of Bill 104, An Act to establish the Université de l’Ontario français, brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt and the NDP critic for francophone affairs.

I want to first of all thank the member for Nickel Belt for all of the excellent work that she has done in support of the over 600,000 francophones in Ontario. Bill 104 is

the result of a province-wide consultation, as she has mentioned in her remarks, that was held in many communities across Ontario.

One of the main recommendations stemming from the États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français was the creation of a Franco-Ontarian university. This bill that she has introduced and we're debating today aims to do just that.

Le but de ce projet de loi est précisément de répondre à cette recommandation.

It urges the Premier and the government to listen to the Franco-Ontarian community and commit to the creation of a French-language university in Ontario for everyone. The French language is a constitutionally recognized official language of our province and our country, and Franco-Ontarians deserve the right to access their post-secondary studies in French. This request is supported by the Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario and the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne.

Along with the Ontario NDP caucus, I fully support the creation of a francophone university for all in Ontario as I recognize the importance and the contribution of francophone communities across Ontario.

French-speaking Ontarians from across the province have waited long enough for the opportunity to complete their university studies in French. We've heard from students and families about how hard it is to gain access to French-language classes in our post-secondary system.

Les étudiants et étudiantes, ainsi que leurs familles, nous ont clairement indiqué à quel point il est difficile d'avoir accès à des cours en français dans notre système d'éducation postsecondaire.

In the 1960s we saw the creation of French-language elementary and secondary schools. It only makes sense to have a French-language university that is available to everyone in Ontario.

C'est juste normal d'avoir une université francophone pour tous les gens de l'Ontario.

There is no reason why anyone in the House should not be supportive of this bill. I look forward to seeing this bill move through the legislative process and becoming law so that every Ontarian will have the opportunity to complete their university studies in French.

The time is now—c'est le moment d'agir—particularly as we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the French presence in Ontario.

I want to thank everyone who has pushed for the creation of the Franco-Ontarian university, including many members of the francophone community, for their hard work on this very important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. I'm very pleased to speak to this very important bill brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt, who has been a long-time advocate for the francophone community in Ontario.

Similar to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, both my kids are in French immersion and I've seen a very good result and, in fact, a very good experience. My daughter often tells me about it coming back from school, and I'm picking up a bit of French here and there as I tutor her, helping her with her homework.

I think in spirit this is a very good bill to make sure that the French language remains strong in our post-secondary education. I know there are members of student groups here with us in the Legislature this afternoon. I want to assure them that our government supports bilingualism and the francophone community being strong.

I look forward to further debates on this, and I'm happy to support this bill as presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Nickel Belt on bringing forward this bill for us to consider today.

I am the MPP for London West, which is not in a designated French-language area. However, we do have a growing francophone population, not just in London but across the southwestern region. In fact, there are estimates that in my region, southwestern Ontario and central Ontario, within the next 10 years nearly half of Ontario's francophone population is going to be living in that area.

1420

This is an urgent issue, given the population growth of the francophone community, but it's also an urgent issue from the perspective of post-secondary education policy. I am the post-secondary critic for the NDP caucus, and certainly this bill moves forward on the commitment that was made in the 2013 report of the Expert Panel on French-Language Postsecondary Education, which was itself called Moving Forward, and which recommended the establishment of a French-language university.

We know that across this province, only 22% of post-secondary programs are available to students in French, and the French Language Services Commissioner found that in central Ontario and southwestern Ontario, it can be as little as 3% or even less program options that are available to French-speaking post-secondary students.

What this means is that students are leaving the "French first" school system or the immersion school system—like many MPPs, my daughter attended immersion—but they're leaving the system before they get to high school because they know there are no post-secondary options for them in the area after they graduate from high school. So we are losing that linguistic capacity in our region and across the province when we don't see students moving on to high school, and then of course we don't see students moving on to post-secondary.

Our region needs a highly skilled pool of bilingual workers, given the influx of newcomers and immigrants who are settling in southwestern Ontario. I should also say that there are internationally educated professionals

coming to our region who come from French-speaking countries. They want to be able to access bridging programs so that they can get into their profession here in Ontario, and they don't have the option to do that. That would be another benefit of offering this or for creating a French-language university.

Speaker, I strongly support this bill and look forward to seeing its implementation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

M. Gilles Bisson: Premièrement, comme francophone, comme père et comme collègue NPD—with ma collègue M^{me} Gélinas—je suis très fier d'être ici aujourd'hui pour supporter ce projet de loi.

Écoute, c'est un chemin qui est pas mal long. On le sait, dans la communauté francophone : tout ce qu'on est allé chercher, on est allé chercher nous-mêmes quand ça vient à l'éducation en français au postsecondaire et au primaire, et tout entre les deux poteaux, comme ils disent.

Je veux, premièrement, comme père, dire que, moi, je suis très fier que notre fille Natalie a eu l'occasion d'aller à l'université en français parce que, nous autres, à Timmins, nous avons l'Université de Hearst qui est en français—comme on a à Kapuskasing, comme on a à Hearst—une institution qui est formidable; une institution qui est colocalisée avec le Collège Boréal dans ces trois instances, ces trois sites-là.

Pour nous, comme famille, c'est important parce que ça dit que Natalie a eu la chance non seulement d'aller à l'université chez elle, mais ça veut dire qu'elle a établi sa vie là. Comme pépère, je peux vous dire, c'est important. Quand on a des petits-enfants, on ne veut pas qu'ils s'en aillent trop loin de la maison. Donc, l'autre partie du « mix » de cette affaire-là, c'est qu'il faut donner à nos jeunes l'opportunité de rester dans la région où ils veulent possiblement rester. S'il y a de l'éducation postsecondaire et il y a de l'emploi, il y a plus de chances que ces jeunes-là vont rester.

On apprend de nos expériences. Quand on a créé le Collège Boréal et La Cité—je dis toujours « la cité des jeunes », bien, votre collège, Madame—on a trouvé qu'il y avait certaines personnes qui disaient : « Non, non, non. C'est une perte d'argent. » C'était rien qu'un gros succès. Les jeunes ont choisi d'aller à l'école en français. Les jeunes ont été au Collège Boréal et au collège d'Ottawa. Ils vont faire le même choix qu'ils ont fait à l'Université de Hearst. Donnez-leur le choix et les élèves vont choisir d'aller à l'école en français.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to start by thanking my leader, Andrea Horwath, for taking part in this debate and putting on the record clearly that New Democrats stand 100% with the francophone community and with every Ontarian—that we are ready to take this next step, that we need this new Université de l'Ontario here in Ontario.

I'd like to thank some of the anglophones from all three parties who took part in the debate because this

really shows that this is a step forward for all of us. This is a step forward for our province. By standing up and speaking to this bill today, you put it out clearly. I certainly thank my colleagues, but I also thank the members from the other parties who stood up. They may not be from a francophone background, but they understood the important step that needs to be taken.

Aujourd'hui, je crois que dans cette assemblée, on vient de faire un petit pas historique. C'est la première fois qu'un débat a lieu, face à une université pour l'Ontario français, et tous ceux qui y ont participé, ils ont participé de façon positive. Donc, j'en déduis qu'on a l'appui unanime de la Chambre pour aller de l'avant.

Le prochain pas est clair. Le prochain pas est la mise sur pied d'un conseil des gouverneurs transitoire pour nous amener à tous les prochains pas qui nous amèneront à la route qu'on veut atteindre qui nous amènera à notre Université de l'Ontario français.

Le message est clair. Il a été appuyé par tous les partis dans la Chambre. Il est certainement appuyé par ceux qui ont participé, qui sont venus à Queen's Park aujourd'hui, les 2 200 étudiants qui se sont déjà inscrits. On veut un comité transitoire. Le plus tôt sera le mieux. Je leur donne trois mois, monsieur le Président. Merci.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Mantha moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Unfortunately, I don't have the privilege of referring to myself as a grandfather yet, and, unfortunately, my wife would also probably not be impressed with me if I would, because she is a very young, beautiful woman who has just finished raising her two boys, and we're just starting our honeymoon once again. But I do have some godchildren, some nieces and nephews, and I do have some people in my life that I refer to as grandparents.

Unfortunately, when I was a very young lad, both on my mother's side and on my father's side, I lost my grandparents at a very young age. However, it's one of the things that really attracted me to my wife, seeing that her grandparents, pépère Bidoux and mémère Juliette, were wonderful individuals who really cared for the

entire family structure. They cared for each and every one of their children's children. It was that structure that attracted me quite a bit to my wife.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to introduce my bill here today, the Children's Law Reform Amendment Act (Relationship with Grandparents). I'm reintroducing this bill. It shouldn't be of a surprise to many of the members here because this bill was introduced by a previous member, Mr. Kim Craitor. I've always been one to stand in my place in this House, Mr. Speaker, and give credit where credit is due, and today I'm doing that. I took the opportunity, a couple of days ago, to extend a call to Kim, wondering how he was doing and just telling him that I was taking the initiative of his bill and bringing it forward in this House. A good idea is a good idea regardless of where it comes from, and we need to foster those ideas and move them forward.

1430

The last time it was presented in this House was in 2012 as Bill 48, which was co-sponsored by the then member Christine Elliott along with Cheri DiNovo. It was introduced in previous years: in 2008 as Bill 33 and in 2012 as Bill 67. So this bill has seen this House many, many times. Actually, it's been through this House about five times.

It's far too many times, Mr. Speaker, where it has been proposed in the past and was very well endorsed, was very well spoken about and, unfortunately, sat on the order paper and never moved forward. This is a bill that has been slipping through the cracks for many years. We have to seal that crack, and we have to get this bill through to committee and see this through into law.

I want to give credit to Kim Craitor. He was very passionate about this bill, and for him, it was quite personal. He took the time to express his entire relationship; his experience with his grandparents. For him, this was personal. I hope for him, and for all those grandparents and grandchildren who have lost their relationship, that this bill can finally be passed.

The intent of the bill is to legislate consideration by the Family Court to grant grandparents access to their grandchildren as part of a custody hearing if it is in the best interests of the child. You will see that I will be repeating that several times here today: in the best interests of the child. This is what this bill is about. This bill is not just about grandparents; it's about the children, and grandparents wanting what is best for them.

Many MPPs in this House are frustrated that this bill has never gone through. I recall being in the House when Kim was saying, "It sure seems simple to me. I don't want to be critical of my own government, but come on, guys, wake up. Come on. This bill has to go through."

Not only do I recognize the work Mr. Craitor has put in, but I also want to recognize a former colleague who is here from Parkdale—High Park—

Interjection: Former?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm still here.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Did I say "former?" I am sorry, my dear. She's still the member from Parkdale, and a great member too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just checked her pulse.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, she's still here.

I also want to recognize Christine Elliott. They are huge advocates and worked very closely with Kim on this bill.

It is important to recognize the many grandparents who have been on the journey to get this legislation passed, and I'm proud to stand in my place and continue the fight to see this through. Grandparents deserve it, but the children need it.

What this bill does is amend the Children's Law Reform Act to allow the development and continuation of a relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren. Many of these children have already gone through much stress in their lives, and they don't need any more. People often take for granted the relationship between grandparents and their grandchild or grandchildren.

No one expects that something like this could happen, but it does, way too many times. Young children dealing with broken homes, fights between grandparents and parents, and changes to routines; the one thing children can count on is their grandparents. They can always go home to grandma and grandpa, to mémère and pépère, and expect that hug and expect that warmth.

Often for children, grandparents are a constant in their lives. A place where they can go for that warmth and that love during tumultuous times; a place where they can just be kids, just be with grandma and grandpa and, again, find that hug.

Unfortunately, for many grandparents, due to breakdowns of family they are prohibited from seeing their grandchildren. I can't imagine how sad this must be for so many to lose contact with their loved ones. This makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. Children need love, especially in these difficult times, and often that comes from grandma or grandpa.

Many of these grandparents are more than just grandparents. They're mentors; they provide guidance. Many of these children lack stability in their lives. Often, these grandparents provide it to them, and so much more.

I know that my oldest son, when he heads down to Gogama and visits pépère Jean-Guy and mémère Sue—it doesn't take very much for Grandma Sue to tell him, "Hey, moon pie, how are you doing?", and he goes from a six-foot-two, 280-pound boy to a little moon pie. He crumbles very quickly in the glare of grandma. That's quite an impressive influence that one person has on a child's life.

It's extremely sad that more than 75,000 grandparents in Ontario are denied access to visiting or seeing their grandchildren. That's a fact: 75,000. In addition to that, it's estimated that over 112 grandchildren are suffering from the loss of their grandparents.

Interjection: Thousand.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Let me correct that: 112,000. I thank my seatmate for correcting me and my colleagues who constantly correct me, which I enjoy because I always look at improving my task here at Queen's Park.

These bonds are extremely important and will inevitably affect children for years and generations to come. This bill currently exists in other provinces. It exists in the Yukon. It exists in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia. It's long overdue here in Ontario.

This bill, again, is simple. It states that when a grandparent makes an application to the courts to have the right to access their grandchildren, have the right to custody—or, in some rare cases, they could take full custody of their grandchildren. The problem is, when grandparents get to courts now, they make that case; they make that relationship. However, the court's response to them is, "I'm sorry. You've made your case. I hear what you're telling me, but unfortunately there's nothing in the law for giving me that directive." This bill would give direction to the courts—just direction—because it would add the word "grandparent" to the Children's Law Reform Act where it does not currently exist.

There is still a responsibility, when the grandparent makes an application, to prove that it is always in the best interests of the child. The child will always come first. That's important: that this will always be done in the best interests of the child. The child always, always comes first.

I'm sure that many people here in the House—many of my colleagues are grandparents. I can imagine the pain and anguish you would feel if you were all of a sudden no longer able to see or be in the lives of your cherished grandchildren. I feel, and many others feel, that we need to look at grandparents and their roles in grandchildren's lives.

If that relationship is deemed by the courts to be in the best interests of the child, then we need to look at these options or at least have the ability to look at these options. That's what this bill does.

The relationship between my children and their grandparents is strong. My one son spends weeks at a time—it actually gives me and my wife a break when he's away from the house—but you know that he is there, getting the values which my wife and I have instilled into our kids. We know that he is there in a safe surrounding. We know that he is there, that he is being loved and we know that he's there being fed, which takes away from my expenses. So thank you, père Jean-Guy and mère Sue.

It's sad to think that that relationship is not available to all grandchildren, and that's the sad part. This is what this bill does—to make sure that that relationship not only flourishes but is there now, tomorrow and for years to come because that relationship that grandparents have with their grandchildren is one heck of a special relationship. It is true; it is genuine; it is different.

I see my friend here, Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins—James Bay—and I will address this in my two minutes, but seeing him sitting down, playing trucks in the halls of Queen's Park—that is a moment that will stay in that child's memory for a very, very long time.

I look forward to the debate, Mr. Speaker.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a privilege to be able to stand in my place in this House and add commentary to the debate. I want to start by thanking the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for bringing this bill forward today and having the courage to bring it forward again.

Just shortly after I was elected in 2014, I had one couple visit my office and talk about the former attempts to bring this bill through the House. At that point, they asked me to sponsor this private member's bill. I was unable to at that point, because I had already committed to and started work on my private member's bill last year, which was the Lung Health Act. But I certainly appreciate the comments from the member opposite.

Our government is firmly committed to supporting Ontario's families and ensuring that a child's best interests are looked after, and this is an important part of that commitment. I know that the member opposite was saying he hasn't had the privilege of being a grandparent yet, and I want to let him know that I'm looking forward to that in May. I went to Copenhagen for a couple of days to see my stepson and his fiancée get married. They're expecting our first grandchild in May, and I couldn't be happier. I'm looking forward to that very happy event. Hopefully they'll be living closer to North America than Europe at that particular time.

Again, it brings this home for me, as I'm looking forward to the birth of our first grandchild and really reflecting and pausing to look at my experiences with my own grandparents and my children's grandparents. As we know, the role that grandparents play in the lives of children can be enriching to the children, the grandparents and indeed the extended family.

I just wanted to add a couple of comments about the private member's bill. Under the current law, our courts must consider the "love, affection and emotional ties" between a child and any person who is applying for custody or access. In fact, currently, in an application for custody or access under section 24 of the Children's Law Reform Act, "The merits of an application ... shall be determined on the basis of the best interests of the child," considering a broad range of factors that include among others, "the love, affection and emotional ties between the child" and the persons involved in the child's care and upbringing.

This would likely include grandparents in any instance where the child's grandparents are an active part of the child's life. I want to stress that point, Mr. Speaker: At present, under Ontario law, a grandparent already has the ability to obtain an order for access to their grandchild if such access is found to be in the child's best interests. So when the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's bill states a requirement that a child's relationship with his or her grandparents be considered among the factors in determining the child's best interest, I don't think we should see that as an entirely new concept. It does already exist.

Rather, what the member's bill does is make the grandparents an explicit factor in the determination of access and custody. I know that determining access and custody in today's scenario is really a difficult, complex and highly nuanced decision that a judge needs to make. It says that a change to make grandparents an explicit factor to consider, regarding the best interests of the child, could have symbolic value and may satisfy the concerns of grandparents who believe they should be treated differently from non-grandparents under the language of the Children's Law Reform Act. The proposed amendments are technically unnecessary, however, and would not change how custody or access determinations are made.

In regard to the other reform contained in the member for Algoma-Manitoulin's bill, I think we all need to look very closely at how "unreasonable barriers" are defined in the relationship between children and their grandparents. As well, I would ask the member opposite whether that requires parents to facilitate a positive relationship between the child and the grandparents. I think it's fair to say that some grandparents may have unreasonable expectations about how much access they should have with their grandchildren and where and when that access should take place.

Also, we seem to be working on the presumption that having access with a grandparent is always in a child's best interests, but in reality, that may not always be the case, and I know the member from Algoma-Manitoulin has talked about that. There can be so many determining factors of that: It may be a very strained relationship between a parent or both parents and either set of grandparents. It may be that it's not in the child's best interests because the strain of that access point, of where and when and how long, can be difficult for the child. It's very difficult, sometimes, for the custodial parent or guardian of that child to really know what's being said or done or talked about in the presence of the child, in a strained family relationship. So I just want to be cautionary about that particular situation.

As I said before, family dynamics, particularly during family strains and breakups, are very, very complex. I'm cautious about the bill being overly prescriptive. The decisions that judges have to make in light of strained family dynamics and all the complexities that can fall upon families—make the decisions very difficult for judges. I think there are a lot of complexities that are different. All families and sizes of families have differences. There are differences in family relationships and dynamics there. I know that judges strive to keep the interests of the child at the centre of these decisions.

As we know, just as there are unfit parents who represent a risk to their child's well-being, the same can be true for grandparents, and I think we in this House would recognize that. There have been several court cases, even in the last few years, that have looked at the abuse that some children have had to suffer at the hands of their grandparents. There have been several convictions of grandparents who have mistreated their

grandchildren. I know that those are few and far between, but we do need to recognize that.

I've said before in this House that I was a pediatric nurse at the Hospital for Sick Children for the first 10 years of my nursing career. I was working with children under age four and a lot of children who were coming in with a diagnosis of neglect or potential child abuse or something like that—failure to thrive was another. Those children I remember in my nursing career weren't always parented by parents. They were sometimes coming in with guardians who were aunts, uncles, grandparents. Some of these children that I saw—babies and toddlers, in particular—had horrific signs of abuse.

I remember, actually, the first child I ever admitted to the Hospital for Sick Children was a 13-month-old little girl. She had a rope burn around her neck. The story that I had from the parent and the grandparent at the time of admitting that child was very different from the story that they came in with the next day. The bottom line was that it was the grandparent who was later convicted of abusing this person.

Those are the kinds of things that come to my mind, Mr. Speaker, when I'm looking at the protection of children.

In closing, I think that it's a very difficult decision to prevent someone's access to children in their family, but our concern continues to be paramount—for the well-being of Ontario's children. We want to make sure that we're not overly prescriptive and that judges continue to be allowed to make the nuanced and difficult decisions that they need to, to protect the children who are there in front of them.

I wanted to reiterate again that, under today's law, grandparents are able to ask for access from Ontario's courts, to be able to continue to see their grandchildren.

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In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize again the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's bill today. Those are just really a few of my thoughts. Indeed I do support getting this bill into committee and having that dialogue and a greater debate, to be able to hear from all points of view. Again, I want to thank him for his caring attitude by putting a bill out today that really tries to address some of the issues that we've heard about in our constituencies about parents and families, and grandparents in particular.

Thank you very much. I look forward to hearing further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again, I have to apologize for my hoarse voice, which I hope sounds more sultry to you than it sounds to me.

There's an expression—and I've certainly heard it in Thornhill; maybe it's just a Thornhill thing—that the reason we have kids is so that we can have grandchildren. I think that being a grandparent—apparently, I'm not there yet—is a heck of a lot more fun than being a parent. You can certainly see why, because when you're a grand-

parent, you're there for all the good times. You can say bye-bye when it's not so great.

I grew up with my grandparents living across the street from me. The neighbours used to laugh: There'd be containers of food coming in one direction, full, and going back in the other direction, empty. We could always sneak over to the grandparents' house when our parents weren't letting us watch TV or do other things.

My grandparents really were parents, and if my parents had split up, as some of my friends' parents had—it's very possible that they could have made a court date and gotten divorced without the grandparents' knowledge. How would the grandparents know unless they're being told? People can sneak off and get divorced and the grandparents wouldn't have any input.

I think this bill isn't insisting that grandparents remain in their grandchildren's lives. What this bill is saying is that they must be aware. That's how I'm taking it, that the grandparents must be told there is a divorce going on. The kid has to be—if they're old enough to discuss and to assess what the emotional ties are with the grandparents and to see if the court wants to mandate that the grandparents should have access if they want to have access—that they are able to somehow communicate that to the court system, to the judge.

We see too often in custody disputes that there are a lot of sour grapes and chips on people's shoulders and they'll do anything to punish the opposite party, even so much as hurt their own child by denying their child access to their in-laws or maybe even their own parents, who maybe they feel slighted them.

I think that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin is addressing something that does affect a lot of people. I don't think that this is a small number of grandparents. Certainly there are the vocal grandparents. We've heard of them in the newspapers, who have protested not having access to the grandchildren, but I think that there are probably tens of thousands of grandparents who are denied access to their grandchildren. Perhaps the grandchildren moved away. If they offer to have the grandchildren fly out to visit them, they're not even able to communicate that because they might not even know where their grandchildren are if the court doesn't mandate that they are allowed to have some kind of access.

He's not here today, but the member from Etobicoke Centre told a beautiful story about how his grandfather insisted he learn Ukrainian and learn about the Ukrainian culture, that it was one of the closest relationships in his life and that he really credits his grandfather for a lot of his success.

I bet that if we speak to a lot of people in here and we talk about our families and who was influential in our lives, a lot of us here had a support system that went beyond just our parents and our siblings; it went to aunts and uncles and grandparents. It definitely does take a village to raise a child, and I would hate, for the child's sake, to see that they're denied a relationship with their grandparents if they want to have that relationship and if the grandparents want to have that relationship.

I am also looking forward to hearing from members of the community. I think that it's going to be interesting in committee to see which community groups come to speak on this and what they have to say. I think that the fact that we're living in a multicultural country really says a lot about different cultures and different attitudes to raising children. I think that a lot of the new Canadians—we certainly see it when we go knocking on doors, Mr. Speaker. The door is opened and you start talking to somebody, and it turns out that they're the grandparent, not the parent. The grandparents are there, sometimes living with two or three generations, sometimes four generations, in one house. It's a very vibrant, lively household, and those children are extremely lucky to have that type of atmosphere and that type of upbringing.

I think the main thing we all have to remember is that the child should come first. If a child is only a toddler and the parents get divorced, that child might have different needs as a toddler than they have growing up and being older, perhaps in their teens. I think it would be very sad if we couldn't ensure that grandparents could somehow have a connection to their grandchildren, if the grandchildren want that connection and the grandparents want that connection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Timmins-James Bay

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You should call me père for this debate, because that's how I'm referred to by my grandchildren, or I should say our grandchildren. Murielle and I are quite fortunate. Our two daughters, Julie and Natalie, both have two children. Nathaniel and Victoria, being Natalie's—Julie's children, are the two oldest. Isn't it like a parent, getting your own kids' names mixed up sometimes? Somehow, we never mix up our grandchildren, which is interesting. And Natalie has Ellisa and Eva. I can tell you that they're such a part of our lives; I can't imagine what it would be like not to have them around.

Imagine if we were in a situation, as is unfortunately the case in a lot of situations, where the husband and wife don't get along and they happen to separate. It's a little bit easier for us, because the mothers are our two children. It makes it difficult in regard to how you maintain that relationship if the relationship sours to the point that it affects custody of the children.

I've had people come to my constituency office—I'm sure you have—and people I have run across in my constituency who live exactly that situation: The grandparents were a part of the grandchild's life, the grandchild doesn't know why mère and père, or nonno and nonna, are not coming by anymore and find themselves in this awful situation thinking that somehow or other the grandparents just gave up on them. It's not a question of the grandparents gave up on them; they're just not able to get access because of the bitterness of the separation.

All the member is trying to do is give the judge the opportunity to say, "Let's look at what's practical here."

And if it's doable, let's give grandparents access." I understand there are going to be times when we're not going to be able to do that because it won't be practical. But the bill is written in such a way as to allow that to happen.

I urge us not just to vote for this bill today, but for once to actually allow this bill to go to committee and hopefully come back for third reading, for a vote, and actually make it law. There are a lot of families out there, when it comes to people living in this province, who are affected by this.

I want to end on one last point—I want to leave a little extra time on the clock for my colleagues. We, as grandparents, talk about how when we send the kids home—the great thing about being a grandparent is that we're sending the kids home because we get to have the fun of playing with them and we give them back to the parents because they can take care of them. No, that's not what warms my heart. I know that when my grandkids go home, those kids are in good hands. I don't have to worry about the things I had to worry about or Murieille had to worry about when we were raising our children, because our daughters are great parents. Nos gendres—I don't know how you say it in English.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Son-in-law.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Son-in-law. That's the thing about being French: There's some stuff that doesn't translate.

We know that those kids are in great hands, and when they're with mom and dad, they're well taken care of. So we get to do the spoiling, we get to do the stuff that we maybe didn't have a chance to do when we were grandchildren.

On behalf of all the families out there who would like to see mémère and pépère continue to be part of the lives of these grandchildren, I urge to you vote for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 142, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents. I should start by saying that I do have a conflict on this, because I am a grandparent now and I certainly appreciate how important the relationship of a grandparent can be to their grandchildren. I've seen it firsthand in terms of my own kids and my parents, and all the knowledge and fun and love that was passed on by my parents to my own kids.

1500

In my case, unfortunately, my two granddaughters are not anywhere near Ontario. In fact, they're both in Shanghai. Beatrice, who is now two, and Noelle, who's now eight months, are living with my daughter Abigail and her husband, Mike Paduada, in Shanghai. Luckily, for Skype—that's the way we're able to maintain contact.

I think this bill recognizes the important role that grandparents can play. As was mentioned, it has been debated and passed in this Legislature before. The member from Niagara Falls, Kim Craitor, brought it up a

few years back, and I think it has been debated more than one time. There are questions as to how it would actually work that need to be addressed, and that's why I think it's certainly a good idea that it be passed in this Legislature, that it go to committee and that it spend some time in committee so that those details can be worked out.

I know the member from Algoma-Manitoulin talked about the important criteria that any contact with grandparents has to be in the best interests of the child, and I think that's a really important part of this bill:

"Subsection 24(2) of the act is amended. That subsection sets out the needs and circumstances of a child that the court must consider in determining the best interests of the child. The bill adds to that list the emotional ties between the child and the child's grandparents and the willingness of each person applying for custody of the child to facilitate contact with the child's grandparents, if such contact would be appropriate in the circumstances."

I certainly think this private member's bill should pass, and I hope it goes to committee. I hope there's an opportunity for those people who are interested to get a chance, so that the details of how it would work can be addressed.

I'm just pleased to have had an opportunity to speak briefly. I think we have another speaker who's going to come to speak, so I will finish talking at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise again on this bill. As was mentioned by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, this has been before the House several times. It begs the question: Why are we still debating it? Why has this not happened? I would certainly send that concern over to the government side.

I also wanted to say to the member from Cambridge, because she was very articulate in her concerns that the reason that Kim Craitor brought this forward was because of the actual experiences in court cases, that I will read what one judge said when grandparents actually did go before that judge and asked for the ability to see their grandchildren. Again, the best interests of the child were that these grandparents would have access to their grandchildren, and the judge said, in response, "There's nothing in the current legislation that directs that I should do that, so I'm not going to give you that opportunity." That's why we're here. In the courts, when grandparents go forward to try to get access to their grandchildren and it is in the best interests of the child, judges are still saying things like that. That's why we're here. That's why we need this legislation.

My children didn't have any grandparents, and I only had one, so I can tell you that we miss that opportunity.

I want to share a story—it's very quick—with the member. Obviously not going to be named—a grandmother who raised her grandchildren. The reason she raised her grandchildren in my riding was because her daughter had addiction and mental health issues, was in and out of institutions, was clearly incapable of looking

after them herself. It's a sad story. She raised these children from birth until they were in their teens, and all of a sudden the mother came and asked for custody. That mother—this is her own child, so this is not even a custody dispute in a divorce case—came and asked for custody back, and she had to, by law, give it. Then the daughter refused the grandparent any access to those grandchildren. Remember that this grandparent was, de facto, their parent—the only parent they'd ever known. The daughter went on to relapse. The grandmother lost contact with her grandchildren. Imagine the horror of that. Imagine the sadness, the tragedy of that.

That is exactly the tragedy that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's bill hopes to prevent, because, really, it is about the best interests of the child. We understand the concerns. Some of the concerns are that the grandparents, for an abusive parent, will intercede and will simply be stand-ins to be able to give that abusive parent access to these children again. That's why we go back to this: the best interests of the child.

That's why it's so important, though, to give everyone who's involved in that child's life an opportunity to make their case equally before an adjudicator. That's why it's so important. This is not taken lightly. There were busloads of grandparents who came into this Legislature when this bill was first and second and third introduced. Grandparents across Ontario want this bill to be passed. Parents want this bill to be passed. More importantly, the advocates of our children's best welfare want this bill to be passed. So in the interests of our children, in the interest of the best interests of our children, please let's get this done, finally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 142, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act. I've been contacted by a number of people in my riding over the years about the inability of grandparents to visit their grandchildren. It is an issue: Very caring people who just want the opportunity to visit and be part of their grandchildren's lives. Sometimes it's blocked just because of issues in the family that really are not fair to these people. Many friends of mine are grandparents, and they are such a big part of the children's lives. I think if you look at that—what a loss it would be, for the sake of a sometimes petty battle between parents, that they be blocked or something, because they can add so much—the outings, the guidance, the help.

Children's lives can be so complicated today. The opportunity to get out with grandparents in a situation sometimes that's not quite—it's away from some of the issues that they see in school and their homes. It's so much of a benefit that they can provide.

I know that this bill has been previously put forward five times, and supported, I believe, by all, each time moving onto the next step, but never getting through. We're really hoping that this gives an opportunity for the bill to go through. I know that early in the new year, I'll become a grandparent, and I'd like the opportunity to be part of that. Who knows what the future brings?

The system will be there to protect the children. There are cases when the court is—it's the right decision. But in most cases, I believe, when grandparents are having trouble getting to see their grandchildren, there really is nothing there other than some external issues that really are penalizing the children.

We see this also in the case of foster care. Grandparents are looked upon by the experts as being the first choice. I think that speaks a lot about the credibility and maturity that grandparents can provide. Sometimes it's very worthwhile to the relationships and to the well-being of the child and the grandchildren.

I'm hoping that we can see this bill pass, but not only just pass second reading. I think it's time—it's been through enough—that we see the Legislature here actually take it through and put it into law. There seems to be a general agreement that it's important and that it's the right thing to do. Hopefully we'll see, in the not-too-distant future, that this actually becomes law so it doesn't have come back a seventh time.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker: 8, 33, 22, 67, 48. We've all seen these puzzles where we have to work out the relationship between a series of numbers. Most people would be really challenged to work out these numbers, but many activist grandparents across this province will be able to work it out; and I bet my bottom dollar that if the former member for Niagara Falls, Kim Craitor, is watching, he will know exactly what those numbers mean. Because they are the numbers of the bills brought forward to address this very issue over many years. It was also co-sponsored, as we heard previously, in the last two attempts at the bill by the former member for Whitby-Oshawa and by my caucus member and colleague the member for Parkdale-High Park. Today, we can add 142 to that list. I want to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for bringing this very important bill forward again.

Like other members, I often hear from distraught constituents, grandparents who love and cherish their grandchildren, but who never get to see them; who aren't able to be a part of their lives. They are heartbroken, but as the law stands just now, there is little that they can do about it. For some, it's a matter of no more than an expression of their love for their offspring's offspring. For others, they recognize that their grandchildren desperately need a shoulder to cry on, need support and encouragement, or sometimes they need a place to call home.

Grandparents have so much to offer, as they have done for so many people since time began. Memories are laced with fond recollections of time spent with our grandparents. Scolding was done by parents, but grandparents not so often. In their later years, grandparents often have more time to relax and a bit more time to enjoy what is around them. They can share the volume of wisdom that they've accumulated over the years and, often, life's

experiences that have taught them to appreciate the good things in life.

I'm not a grandparent myself—thank goodness—but yes, Speaker, I'm hoping that one day I will be a grandparent. But I do recognize the joy I see in grandparents when they have their grandchildren around. I remember quite fondly my own grandparents, my nana and my gramps; and the times we spent with them are some of my fondest memories of mine as a child. They were treasured moments that I will never forget.

Unfortunately, that is not the case for thousands. There are somewhere in the region of 75,000 grandparents being denied access to their grandchildren, sometimes for no valid reason. Make no mistake: There are valid reasons to deny access to some grandparents, and we consider this in the bill. It's vitally important that we remember that the best interests of a child should always come first. That is a principle that we must never lose sight of. And I'm glad to see that this bill addresses the issues in a couple of ways, and I'll quote them.

"A person entitled to custody of a child shall not create or maintain unreasonable barriers to the formation and continuation of a personal relationship between the child and the child's grandparents." "Unreasonable barriers" should address one of the concerns of the member opposite. It also says that the contact should be facilitated "if such contact would be appropriate in the circumstances." These are very important points to be made as we consider this bill.

Speaker, it's five times that this bill has been read in this Legislature and five times that it has passed second reading. This time I'm hoping that it does the same, but I'd like to see something different this time: I'd like to see this brought to committee. Let's get the work done, let's make sure we get it right and let's get these grandparents the grandchildren that they so well deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Thornhill, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Parkdale-High Park, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Hamilton Mountain.

Let's do something. If there's something that we can accomplish, let's wrap this up, put it in a box and put it under the Christmas tree for grandparents. We have an opportunity to do something that has been so needed for such a long time.

I listened to all the comments that were put around the House, and it is absolutely necessary to put the reference to grandparents inside this piece of legislation, because the answer, when a grandparent goes to the courts and makes their case—the response that they always get is, "Thank you for making your case. You're justified in your cause. You've established the relationship and the need that you have with your grandchildren. However, I do not have the tool to provide you with that opportunity." This is the tool. If we do this—and I'm

going to reiterate it again—it will be done, and it must be done in the best interests of the child.

I'll just read this: "the willingness of each person applying"—it's not automatic. You still have to apply. You have to make a case for your want, your willingness, that relationship with your grandchild. You have to make an application for custody of the child, to facilitate contact between the child and the child's grandparents, if such contact would be appropriate in the circumstances.

Again, it's providing the tool to our courts to act in the best interests of the child, respecting the wants of grandparents. This is what this bill does. Let's wrap it up. Let's bring Santa Claus a present for grandparents. Let's do this.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS, RESEARCH AND CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AU DEUIL PÉRINATAL, LA RECHERCHE SUR CE GENRE DE DEUIL ET L'AIDE AUX PERSONNES VIVANT UN TEL DEUIL

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day / Projet de loi 141, Loi exigeant des recherches et des programmes sur les pertes de grossesse et les décès néonatals et proclamant le 15 octobre Journée de sensibilisation au deuil périnatal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to mention that my granddaughter Poppy is here, and my daughter Bianca. My son-in-law Scott Gosse, all the way from Belleville, is here, and my wife, Sharon, is here. Welcome.

This is a bill that, really, I didn't want to do. Usually you want to do things, but sometimes you have to do things that need to be done.

I just want to read from an article written by Ashley Csanady, from the National Post, a couple of days ago. I think she sums up what this bill is all about:

"About 37,000 soon-to-be parents lose their baby along the way each year in Ontario—and as many as one in three women will lose a pregnancy in her lifetime. Many of them struggle with a system that often lacks support and training, as well as families, friends and even health care providers who don't know what to say. Then their grief is compounded by a lack of answers and insufficient research to provide them."

This is something that most of us—most people in this province—probably do not want to talk about. It is something that happens to thousands of Ontario families and mothers every year. They lose children through miscarriages, stillbirths or immediately after birth. When that

happens, what they run across is almost like a two-tier health care system, in this province and across Canada.

1520

If you're fortunate enough to have the birth of a wonderful baby, you get the full and the best health care and support there is. If you happen to be unfortunate, with the loss of a baby, all of a sudden you are treated totally differently. There isn't the help, the support or the medical experience to give you the counselling you need for yourself and the family. It isn't there. It's very haphazard.

If you happen to be lucky and to be in some of our excellent hospitals—Mount Sinai, or Sunnybrook—there are great teams of expert doctors there, and nurses and nurse practitioners who will help you through this traumatic time. But in most cases—we had a young mother, a very brave young mother, who came to speak at the press conference the other day, Jamie McCleary, and she said it was one of the worst experiences of her life to see her unborn child treated like medical waste. Nobody knew what to do with this dead child of hers. You can imagine the trauma of this mother who carried this baby for all these months and this baby is basically treated, as I said, like medical waste.

The problem is that it's sort of a cultural taboo. We don't like to talk about it. We can't talk about it. It's so difficult for mothers and families and fathers. So, therefore, it's never brought to the public realm. The public knows very little about this trauma that mothers and families go through. Mothers told me that they go to the hospital and the doctors or a nurse or friends will say, "Well, you lost that one, but go ahead, try again. Have another one." There's no counselling, no sympathy, and it's something you can't talk about because it's something, supposedly, that you're not supposed to talk about. Subsequently, the counselling support afterward is not there.

The way babies are treated if they're not successful in their birth is really a hit-and-miss thing that is really disgraceful. I know I've talked about some of these things and the various experts, and they all agree: We need to start breaking the silence. There's a Berlin Wall of silence around infant loss and pregnancy. Whether you're in the medical community or whether you're in the general population or in the Ministry of Health, it's a subject rarely dealt with. Subsequently, it doesn't get the attention and the resources that it desperately needs.

Thankfully, most of the doctors that I have talked to in recent days are world experts; we're very fortunate. They all say we need this attention. We need to talk about it. We need to invest. We need to expand existing programs and we need to acknowledge that this is a health issue that can no longer be ignored.

I talked with Dr. John Kingdom here, the head of obstetrics and maternal health at Mount Sinai. He totally agrees. We have to pay attention to this so that we can get mothers and families the medical support that they need when they go through childbirth and pregnancy. These are things that can be done. We have the ability

but because of this, as I said, wall of silence, it's not given the attention, the resources it requires.

There is a network called PAIL, Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, where a lot of volunteers go forward and talk to grieving mothers and families, and give them some support. But this is a very small, fledgling organization of volunteers that's standing alone in trying to give help to these mothers and families. We need to invest in these types of organizations and have programs right across the province of Ontario. Right now, as I said, it's very hit-and-miss.

These organizations, by the way, quietly helping mothers and families, are all over Ontario—they're in Brampton, Hamilton, London, Peterborough, Toronto, Markham, Durham, Barrie, Woodstock, Sarnia, Renfrew county, and Ottawa—but they're working with limited resources, and they need to be resourced, along with the co-ordination of expert medical support, which is possible, because we do have the experts here in Toronto, and we have experts in other parts of the province, but we need to co-ordinate them.

There is an urgent need to do this, because the experts even say, like Dr. Kingdom says, despite all the advances of medical science, the rate of infant loss and death has not decreased in this province. It's still on the rise every year—thousands of mothers—and the research can't really tell us why this happens. Does this occur more in Ontario than it does in New York state or in Europe? We don't know. This comprehensive type of research of the causes and the incidence is not really done. We need to fund this kind of research and co-ordinate this research across the province. We can do it with the expert doctors and nurses that we have here.

We have a wonderful nurse practitioner who came to the press conference the other day. She came to the press conference. She is the coordinator of this outreach program out of Sunnybrook—Wendy Mouldsdale. She does this every day, and she says, "I believe this bill is an important step to begin collaborating with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Together we can share our knowledge...." We have to do better.

Dr. Mathew Sermer from Mount Sinai says, again, we need this kind of legislation. Dr. Seaward from Mount Sinai—I got a letter from a doctor from Sunnybrook from this morning, saying we need this kind of co-ordination.

We have capable nurses; we have capable midwives; we've got an excellent health care system. But there's a big gap in our health care system when it comes to mothers who lose their children through miscarriage and stillbirth, or early infant death. They just suffer in silence. They can't talk to their relatives, because it's something you don't talk about. Sometimes their family doctors don't know anything about the grief they're going through. Some of them suffer serious mental challenges because of this tragedy they go through. It can affect your mental health and your physical health—not to mention the agony of losing a child that they've carried for months.

What this bill would do is basically help bring—what we're here for today, I think, with your support—we can

bring attention to this subject that nobody wants to talk about. We need to start getting people to ask questions, to discuss solutions and to share best practices. The essence of this bill is to try and bring this out of the darkness into the front of our health care system.

At the same time, I'm also asking, with this bill, in order to help with this awareness—as you know, we've done this with many bills in this House; we've had awareness days—for October 15, which is this day in many other jurisdictions, to be called Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day. That would help too.

It's not going to solve all of these problems overnight, because some of these, as many of you have known, have been talked about quietly for years, but very little has been done about it except, again, in isolated circumstances where you've got wonderful doctors and midwives who do something about it. There are programs, as I said, at Mount Sinai and Sunnybrook, but we need to have this available to all mothers and families across Ontario, to see what practices, what protocols exist in Cornwall or Kenora, North Bay and in Burlington. We've got to know what's there for mothers there.

1530

Right now it is not a comprehensive health care system. As I said before, it's a two-tier health care approach that exists in this province. It's not to blame anybody, the doctors or the people in the Ministry of Health; it's something that needs to change culturally. We need a change in our culture here towards pregnancy and infant loss, and this bill hopefully will move this along to where it should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to commend the member for Eglinton—Lawrence on this very worthy and compassionate initiative before the Legislature today. He makes a lot of outstanding points and tells some heart-wrenching stories.

I've got to think that the worst thing ever in life is if you have to bury a child. I can't imagine that. You'd never wish that on your worst enemy. Sadly, this Saturday I'm going to a funeral for a friend of the family. He has been a good supporter, a businessman and a leader. His mom will be burying him. He lived to his fifties: Tom Fleming. Poor Val lost both Tom and her husband, Art, within a year.

It's a celebration of life too, a celebration of what Tom accomplished. Whether you lose a child as an adult, teen, or youngster, we have ways of coping with that. It never makes up for the loss, but we have ways of families coming together to give support. But as the member for Eglinton—Lawrence points out, it doesn't exist for children who are stillborn or for miscarriages. I don't quite understand why. He says it has been taboo, which is true. I always found it interesting. When Deb and I went through her pregnancies, and friends—you just don't tell anybody. What's the unwritten rule? Three months or something like that: You don't tell anybody. It's just the way it is. It's kind of puzzling, because you probably should. It would help us cope with that kind of loss.

As a result of that, without these coping mechanisms, a way of people giving the support of family, friends, health care professionals, you feel abandoned and awfully empty. I guess for stillborn, too, my God, you go through the same gut-wrenching, extraordinary physical stress. As a mom, the child is born and you've got that as the end product: a healthy baby. But for a stillborn, there's that crushing emptiness that would result from that. As the member said, people will often say, "Well, you can go back at it; you're young." It's really no way to deal with this. This member has a number of initiatives to deal with this in terms of looking at best practices, comparing scientific data, investing in counselling. I think those are all very worthy and timely initiatives.

I think the other aspect, too—I know I'm sharing my time with my colleague from Thornhill—you beat yourself up, too, right? Without some answers and some help and support, you start beating yourself up when this tragedy hits a family.

We're lucky, Speaker; we have two beautiful little girls, Miller and Maitland, six years apart. Miller just turned eight at the beginning of October; Maitland will be almost two for Christmastime—she'll be two in March. We had some good luck at the back ends and some tough luck in the middle, but we've got two.

In these situations I know the mind will whirl: What could I have done better? Should I have made some different approach on my own health? Did I exert myself too much? Dads will think this, but for the moms it's going to be deeply wired in. And if you don't have some better answers, some better practices, some counselling, that's going to haunt you forever. You start blaming yourself. I suspect that's some of the psychology behind all of this.

But if when a stillborn birth occurs, or a miscarriage, there's a better understanding of the science, there's some emotional support from family, from friends, from others who have gone through it, if there's an understanding of the psychological counselling that can help make—I can't say adjustment, but help to cope—I think we're going to be all a lot better off for it.

I commend the member. It's forward-looking. I just had never questioned before why there's that three-month taboo. There really isn't a reason for it. And for all of those who go through that gut-wrenching loss and emptiness, it's going to help.

So good for the member for the initiative. I fully support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to speak to this bill, an act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day. I thank the member for Eglinton—Lawrence for bringing it forward.

Losing a child is an unimaginable pain. Whether that loss is in infancy, at birth or before term, it leaves a parent missing a piece of something so precious that should have been—a loss of a dream and the joy that was

felt when they learned that they were bringing a new life into our world and the thoughts of the possibilities that the future held.

A family close to me was touched by such a loss at full term. It was a horrendous time. The nursery was ready. The shower had happened. Everyone was excited and waiting for this wonderful gift that would be joining their family. But that excitement came crashing down as things went horribly wrong very quickly, leaving extreme emotional destruction in its path. This is just one experience that I'm very familiar with.

The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network reports that one in five pregnancies in Canada end in miscarriage, and that in Canada, six of every 1,000 births are stillborn. Thirty-seven thousand families across Ontario experience pregnancy and infant loss each year. Those parents deserve and require support and understanding during their time of grief. That is what this bill aims to do. By amending the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act, this bill would add new duties and functions to the minister.

In addition to those duties and functions already in place, passage of this bill would require the minister to establish research initiatives and programs, undertake analysis to look at and understand what contributes to pregnancy loss and infant death, develop programs to reduce the risk, provide counselling and support to families affected by these tragedies, and undertake research into the best practices of other jurisdictions. It's hard to argue against the Minister of Health being required to put all of these items in place, and I wouldn't want to do that. They are all needed.

There are many things that the minister should be required to do when it comes to the delivery of health care in Ontario. The lack of services for people with mental health problems has been spoken about often in this chamber.

Earlier this year, I was taken on a tour of a few homes operated by the Good Shepherd in Hamilton: a transitional house where youth between 16 and 20, some of them dealing with mental health issues, learn life experience and skills and learn how to cope; a residential home for youth and supporting families who need support and tools to deal with their mental health problems, trauma and conflict resolution; a shelter for homeless and street-involved youth which provides 20 beds as well as on-site access to mental health professionals, a physician, a nurse practitioner, as well as youth support workers.

Thanks to the dedicated staff—those workers—and their own fundraising efforts, they manage all of this with government funding of \$44 per day. They're terribly underfunded and, in fact, they have just 1.6 mental health clinicians to service all of Hamilton. Children's Mental Health Ontario reports that 6,000 kids are waiting a year for mental health treatment.

We hear often of cuts to our mental health services as well as other health care. I hear it regularly from constituents. The member from Nickel Belt has spoken about the loss of 87,000 hours of nursing care in Health Sciences North.

1540

I appreciate what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence is trying to do with this bill, and I support him in this cause. Pregnancy loss and infant death is an exceptionally traumatic experience that does not get the attention it deserves. D. Ferguson is quoted on the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network's website as saying, "How very softly you tiptoed into my world, almost silently, only a moment you stayed, but what an imprint your footprints have left on my heart." It's very easy to underestimate the impact these events can have on mothers, fathers and the entire family, but I think this quote really brings it home.

This bill also serves as a reminder of where the government is failing to provide services right across the entire mental health sector.

The bill will also establish October 15 each year as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day in Ontario. This date is already recognized in the US, parts of Canada, Australia and the UK, and it was previously brought forward to this chamber by my colleague the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I think it's fitting we make this declaration now in Ontario.

Again, I thank the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for bringing this bill forward, and I hope that we can pass it through committee and make sure we get this work done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to rise and debate this very important bill brought forward by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, named the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness, Research and Care Act, 2015.

I noticed that there has been quite a bit of attention given to this bill since being introduced recently. Other than the coverage in media, I actually received e-mails from my constituency. Constituents felt passionately about this bill, and they urged me to support this bill. I would like to quote one of the e-mails: "Losing a baby is very traumatic for a family. It goes against the natural order of things. It can leave families feeling isolated and alone. These families are grieving, and need access to support and resources—support and resources which are sorely lacking today."

Which brings me to my fond memory of first having my two kids. Seven years ago, when my daughter was first born at Mount Sinai, which is a wonderful facility situated in my riding, there were entire wraparound services around my wife, the mother, and the newborn. I remember it was specifically on postpartum depression. The mother was cared for in that. I felt like, "Wow, I've never experienced this before." It was a similar experience when my son, Matthew, was born two years after.

So I'm a little surprised by the lack of services or supports in place for those who lose infant babies or who had a miscarriage. To me, I think they probably go through an even greater chance of emotional distress.

So I fully support this bill. I think it speaks to some of the gaps in service. If passed, it would establish and

expand comprehensive research initiatives and programs to assist mothers and families who experience pregnancy loss and infant death, undertaking a comprehensive, comparative analysis to understand the factors that contribute to an increased risk of pregnancy loss or infant death. This is very important. In this day and age, we all have BlackBerrys and cellphones. Everyone is working on their laptops. You would think that collection of data is so easy, yet we are still dealing with an area where limited data is available for any analysis, for the ministry to even look at it and make some policy around it. I think this bill does just that: It actually shines a light and calls out the need for more data collection, more attention paid in this area.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence gave us some good numbers, good stats, on infant loss in the past. I think it is time for the province and for this government to take a look at what we can do to provide that much-needed support.

It also speaks to developing and expanding programs to help reduce the risk of pregnancy loss and infant death: Develop and expand existing programs across Ontario to provide counselling and support to mothers and families who have experienced a pregnancy loss or infant death. I said I can only imagine a parent going through losing a child. Any time you lose a family member, you need time to grieve. You remember the good times you had with this family member. In this case, it would be very difficult. I can only imagine the parent going back home and seeing the room prepared for the newborn and starting to wonder what it would be like. They can only imagine what it could be like, as opposed to remembering those fond moments.

I think the support has to be there for these mothers, and fathers as well, to go through a very, very tough period of time.

It also suggests to undertake a comprehensive analysis and survey of the best practices in other jurisdictions in regard to prevention of pregnancy loss or infant death. We have to look around the world and see how other places are dealing with this issue. I think that if we put our minds and resources to this, we could be a leader in this area.

I just recently had a visit to China. They're envious of our biomedical science and the way that we manage our medical system here. I think that if we start paying attention to this area, we could be the leader in this area and provide further assistance, not just to Ontarians but outside of Ontario and even to the world.

I'm fully supporting this bill, I want to thank the member for bringing it forward, and I look forward to further discussion on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Once again, I'm apologizing for my raspy voice today.

Of course, this is something that we should be discussing here, because we're the ones who set an example for all of Ontario.

I'm reminded of the difference in culture if a woman has been raped. It wasn't that long ago that nobody would want to admit they were raped. Certainly, parents didn't want people to know their daughter had been raped. They felt that nobody would want to associate with her or possibly marry her. There was also a huge taboo. We went from that to much more openness—not enough, but much more openness; certainly in the medical field, where doctors will even sometimes ask women now, when they're doing a case history or seeing a woman for the first time, "Have you ever experienced any traumas of a sexual nature?" They'll ask it in leading terms. But I don't think doctors will necessarily ask a woman if she has ever miscarried a child or things like that, unless she's trying to get pregnant. Then they want to know the case history and want to know if it's an at-risk pregnancy.

1550

There are special rooms in emergency rooms set aside in all of our hospitals for women who have been raped, with special information. You would hope that the hospitals would be much more understanding, but I have a feeling they're not, because they're under incredible budgetary strain to separate a woman who has given birth to a stillborn child from other women who have given birth to healthy children. You can just imagine: The mother still needs the same health care as a woman has delivered a healthy child. She has still delivered a baby, there could still be complications and she still needs to be taken care of. We would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the resources can be put in place and that we could do something to ensure that the resources are in place, if they're not in place everywhere.

I'm going to just say a little bit about my culture. In the Jewish culture—not everybody follows it, of course—basically you're not pregnant until you're past your first term, because it was the understanding that so many women miscarried in the first trimester that you wouldn't tell people you were even pregnant, and if people asked you, you would say, "Well, it's not three months yet, so we're not even going to talk about it."

Certainly, observant families and even many secular Jewish families won't hold baby showers and won't decorate the nursery. They'll order it, like a registry when you're getting married and you order dishes and things like that. They'll order everything and have everything ready to be delivered, and they'll have a relative or friend at the house to have everything delivered when the woman is in the hospital and they get the phone call that everything is okay, because it's a tragedy, obviously, if a baby does not survive the birth or has some kind of medical complication and doesn't live long. But that tragedy is exacerbated by a mother and father having to come home to see all the clothes and the nursery and everything set up.

Of course, it's not always practical. My father always talks about how my mother wouldn't want to have anything in the house. She had four children, and he would be left scrambling, because he'd have to go and get everything, especially for the first child. She didn't

have anything. He said, "I'm bringing a woman home with a baby." Of course, in those days, they kept you in the hospital for a week, so that left all your relatives time to prepare things for you at home.

My mother had a little brother, when she was about four years old, who had a hole in his heart. Today, that would be easily repairable. But my grandparents were told, "There's nothing we can do. He's going to die in two weeks, and you shouldn't bring him home. Just tell people that he died and we'll take care of it from here on." Well, my grandmother wouldn't hear of that. She took the baby home, and he lived for two weeks. Because he hadn't been circumcised yet, he couldn't have a proper burial. So, my grandfather had to take a shovel and bury him. It's really heartbreaking. I never talk about it. Sorry, between my hoarse voice and being choked up—it's not a good combination.

We all know of somebody who has lost a baby from SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. The celebrity Marla Shapiro in Toronto became a spokesperson because she was interviewed; she lost one of her children to sudden infant death syndrome. She went on to have a career, basically, in the public forum, speaking out, not just about that but about women's health advocacy, and became a TV spokesperson on City TV. She's a regular. She ended up with her own talk show on health issues. I think that was a very brave thing for her to do, because when she did it, very few people were able to go on TV and in the public forum—I'm not even able to talk about somebody I never even met—and she helped so many people by doing that. So, kudos to her and for all the great work she has done.

I think that our health care professionals are programmed and trained to deal with healthy babies, and they're uncomfortable and just want to see it end, because it's painful for them, as well. You can certainly imagine the health care staff spending hours getting to know the parents, only to have the child not survive the delivery. Of course, we all want to do what we can to raise awareness. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I also want to thank the member for Eglinton—Lawrence for bringing forward this bill, the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness, Research and Care Act. This is certainly an initiative that the NDP fully supports. In fact, my colleague the MPP for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek had introduced a similar bill in 2010.

As women's issues critic for the NDP caucus, I want to frame my comments from the perspective of reproductive justice. Reproductive justice acknowledges that not all women have the same ability to make reproductive choices. Their reproductive autonomy may be limited by lack of access to abortion services or by lack of social and financial resources that are necessary to have children and raise them in safe and supportive environments. So this bill recognizes that pregnancy loss must equally be included in the full spectrum of pregnancy and parenting options that reproductive justice

includes. That covers abortion, IVF, childbirth, adoption and, now, pregnancy loss.

I want to speak for a moment about language. Certainly language evolves; and I congratulate the member for the language of this bill, because what we see here is a long, overdue step forward from the term "miscarriage," which is how we often refer to natural pregnancy loss. But what the term "miscarriage" conveys is that there is some fault or blame involved in the loss of the pregnancy, when actually physicians will tell us that pregnancy loss is most often the physiology of a healthy body recognizing that a pregnancy is incompatible with life.

Unfortunately, Speaker, too many people do not understand the causes of miscarriage. There was a study by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine that found three quarters of both men and women believed that stress can cause miscarriage, two thirds believed that lifting a heavy object could trigger the loss of a pregnancy, and one quarter believed that miscarriage could be caused solely by the woman not wanting the pregnancy. The reality is that most miscarriages are not associated with any action or inaction on the part of the woman. Most are caused by spontaneous chromosomal anomalies that make human development impossible. They also occur, as the member said, much more frequently than many people realize. Women who know they are pregnant experience a rate of miscarriage of about one in five, or 20%, but the rate is much, much higher if it includes the loss of fertilized eggs before the woman knows she is pregnant.

But because of misinformation about the causes of pregnancy loss, many women feel shame and stigma if they admit experiencing a loss of pregnancy. We have a society that values the worth of women according to their ability, their desire and their willingness to carry a pregnancy to term and to raise children. So it's no wonder that women often blame themselves. So by talking openly and honestly about pregnancy loss, which is what this bill does by talking about the incidence of pregnancy loss and what can happen afterwards, we can reduce the stigma and the guilt that often accompanies pregnancy loss.

Speaker, we need to ensure that there are appropriate supports in place to help those who experience pregnancy loss—not only the woman but also the woman's partner and others who cared about the pregnancy. There may be feelings of profound grief at the loss of hopes and plans for a relationship with a child; and the loss of future identity as a mother, as a father or as a grandparent.

At the same time, reproductive justice requires that we recognize and respect that there may be differences in responses to pregnancy loss. We have to avoid assuming that all individuals will experience the loss in the same way and will need the same kinds of support. We have to remember that the social norms of masculinity and femininity that condition women's response to pregnancy loss have an equal impact on men, who are expected to be stoic and strong in their handling of grief and may actually face disapproval if they display emotion

For pregnant women who have been abused by their intimate partner—and we know that the risks of violence to women increase significantly during pregnancy. We know that the World Health Organization found that spousal abuse increases the risk of miscarriage by 50%. Women who experience pregnancy loss as a result of sexual violence require very specialized counselling and supports to deal with the complex emotions that are associated with the loss of the pregnancy.

1600

Before I close, Speaker, I just wanted to go back to what I had said in the beginning about the full spectrum of pregnancy and birth options for women. There is a link between pregnancy loss and abortion. When the fetus dies, a D&C is often required to fully end the pregnancy, and this means that comprehensive access to abortion services is vital across this province, not only to protect women's reproductive autonomy but also to support women through the loss of the pregnancy.

So, Speaker, again I want to congratulate the member for bringing forward this bill. On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, we believe that this is an initiative that is important and that should go forward as part of our health care system and the kinds of supports that we provide to women and men and families in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's always a pleasure to stand in the House and speak to important issues. I have to say, joining my colleagues from London West, Niagara West-Glanbrook, Trinity-Spadina and Hamilton Mountain—some very powerful personal reflections today. I always love private members' hour. It gives us a chance to talk about issues of mutual interest and concern, but today is particularly important.

I want to thank, in that regard, my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence for tabling this conversation today by bringing forward this bill, Bill 141, the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness, Research and Care Act. I want to thank him because this is an important conversation for us to have, not in a finger-pointing kind of way but in a "Let's embrace the survivors of loss and let's do that in a compassionate and empathetic way."

This bill, this conversation, addresses an issue that is often underreported and one which we, in Ontario and across the country, often have a hard time talking about, and yet it is an issue which touches so many lives—one that has touched, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, virtually all of the members in this House. Sadly, it has touched me and my family personally.

The expected birth of a child is supposed to be one of the happiest moments in one's life, a time full of excitement and wonder and, ultimately, hope for the future. Far too often, these magical moments are cut short by unexpected events. There is no reason for this subject to remain a taboo, and that is exactly why today's debate is so important.

Especially here in Ontario, we are proud of our ability to speak openly about the issues that impact our lives. That is why I'm pleased to say that, if passed, this bill

will proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day in Ontario. Sometimes, one of the most powerful and important things you can do to effect change is to simply raise awareness about an issue, and this bill will certainly do just that.

Of course, awareness itself is not enough. We need to deal with the complexities that lie at the heart of issues relating to pregnancy loss and infant death. Individuals who go through these extremely trying experiences need a range of supports to help them cope and to assist them in their recovery. Because each individual and family's experience is unique, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to providing support when it's needed most.

That's why, importantly, this bill calls for the development and expansion of existing programs across Ontario to provide counselling and support to mothers and their families who have experienced pregnancy loss or infant death. In addition to calling for more research into the prevention and understanding of these issues, an evidence-based approach is needed to help us to help mothers, fathers and their families and all of their loved ones, indeed, when they need it most, to heal their wounds, both seen and unseen.

According to a study conducted by the University of Rochester and published in the British Journal of Psychiatry, the depression and anxiety experienced by many women after a miscarriage can continue for years, even after the birth of another child. Sadly, we hear stories of survivors whose lived experience of loss simply isn't being validated or supported. For example, mothers are told that they will be fine once they have a healthy baby, when the research demonstrates that this is simply not true. Of the women who've had one miscarriage or stillbirth before giving birth to a healthy child, almost 13% still had symptoms of depression 33 months after their new baby was born. Of those with two previous losses, almost 19% had symptoms of depression—again, almost three years after the birth of a healthy child. That's close to three years, as I mentioned, of struggling to bear a burden that is, to all of us, inconceivable. As the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook said in his remarks—indeed, Speaker, in his extraordinarily personal remarks—no one should have to bury a child. This is completely outside the natural order.

Prenatal loss is not routinely considered a risk factor for antenatal or postpartum depression in the same way as, for example, personal or family history of depression or exposure to other of life's stresses. We need to change the way that we think about this type of loss, and that is what this bill hopes to accomplish. It would recommend necessary targeted support, because, as we know, maternal depression does not just affect mothers, but entire families. It is our duty as public servants to support Ontarians who suffer such tremendous losses.

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that it takes a village to raise a child, but when a child is lost, that village suffers profoundly. I commend my colleague the member for Eglinton-Lawrence for introducing a bill which would have long-standing positive impacts not just for the

women who have lost a child, but for their families and their circles of care too.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill, because no one should feel like they are going through these incredibly difficult times alone, without the necessary support. So let's make sure, Speaker, that they don't have to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I truly want to thank the members that spoke. This certainly brought out the best. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook said very eloquently that we don't want these thousands of Ontario women to feel abandoned, and they are right now. They're abandoned. There is no help, basically. If you lose a child, there's no medical help; there's no counselling support; there's no family help. They are abandoned. That's why there's an imperative for us as legislators to move our government, our province, our society to stop this.

We can't continue to see mothers left to suffer, as the member from London West said, because of biological, chromosomal activity. This is what's happening. They're discriminating. As I said, there's a two-tier health care system that punishes hundreds of thousands of people. They get punished because they had this misfortune. They get punished twice: They lose that child, then they have no one to help them when they go home.

I thank the member from Thornhill for talking about her grandmother. These are the things we never talk about. The courage you had in speaking about it—I thank you for doing that.

I want to thank all the courageous women who have been helping with this fight: Michelle LaFontaine, who is the chair of the PAIL Network; Wendy Mouldsdale, who is a pediatric nurse practitioner, who is here from Sunnybrook; Jamie McCleary, a very brave mother from the PAIL Network; Dr. Kingdom—all these brave people who are speaking out, because up until now, you weren't allowed to speak about this.

It's time to take some action. I'm committed to doing what I can, through this bill. As the member from Burlington said, more than awareness, we need to change things in this province to get rid of this discrimination and this punishment of women that happens every day. It's not by the hundreds; it's by the thousands. Women are being punished and families are being denied the support they need. This has got to end.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everybody for their comments. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Madame Gélinas.

Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to establish the Université de l'Ontario français.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Madame Gélinas?

Mme France Gélinas: The Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? So moved.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Mantha has moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Michael Mantha: General government, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS, RESEARCH AND CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AU DEUIL PÉRINATAL, LA RECHERCHE SUR CE GENRE DE DEUIL ET L'AIDE AUX PERSONNES VIVANT UN TEL DEUIL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Colle has moved second reading of Bill 141, An Act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mr. Colle?

Mr. Mike Colle: To the committee dealing with private bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the committee on private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDING COAL
FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015
SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON
POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2015, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the member for Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 9 because there are a couple of things I'd like to wrap up in saying.

As we all know in this House, Bill 9 is very light legislation. It reflects the trend we have from this government in terms of feel-good environmentalism photo ops, as well as legislation feel-good moments.

We all know that closing coal plants is a finite issue here in Ontario.

It's interesting. I want to quote a member from this House in a recent debate that we had on Bill 9. After quoting it, you'll perhaps understand why I'm disappointed that they didn't support our one amendment that we had for Bill 9. That quote is from the Minister without Portfolio. In a previous debate on this particular bill, he said, "My good friend, and the former member for Kitchener-Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, was a person who believed in it, and indeed she started the conversion of Lakeview out of the use of coal. I commend her for that, and I have been a long-time champion of her doing that on that occasion."

That's why I can't help but take this time this afternoon to share my disappointment in the government that they did not do right by supporting our amendment and renaming the bill with regard to recognizing Elizabeth Witmer's initiative to start the conversion of that first coal plant.

Carrying on from that, it's safe to say that we've had a number of disappointments with this government. That doesn't take away from the fact that closing coal-fired generation stations is indeed the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do if it's done with a smart plan, and that's where the rub is.

You look great in the chair, Madam Speaker, I must say.

Coming back to doing something with the right plan, a smart plan—makes us hesitant, because with this government's history of eHealth, gas plants, the Green Energy Act, we can't help but be a little anxious with regard to exactly where we'll end up.

That takes me to the fact that, specifically, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, was intended to support new investment and economic growth in Ontario through the creation of a strong and viable renewable energy sector. Madam Speaker, I am sad and frustrated to say that the government has absolutely failed Ontario in this regard. It worries me and the rest of my caucus and, I'm sure, the third party in terms of what else is coming down the pipeline.

We have to talk about cap and trade for a moment or two because that's another worry. I hope that the government's decision to push forward with cap and trade—that it's not modelled on the European system. We don't have all the details yet, so it still leads one to worry about where we might eventually land with regard to this particular program.

Obviously, if anything can be taken away from where the Europeans went with their cap and trade, it's that it was a complete failure as well, much like the Green Energy Act. But we can learn from their failure because we have to be positioned well. We saw the cost of poor planning and pandering to the needs of special interest groups in Europe. What has that resulted in? Unfortunately, that failed vision has seen the re-creation of a dependency that Europe was moving away from. Unfortunately, that dependency is coming back onto coal because of the ill-conceived and total failure of the industrial wind turbine scenario that was fostered in Europe.

We just heard yesterday or the day before that the UK, probably maybe as early as the weekend, is actually looking at coal plants now. We know that as carbon prices have plummeted in Europe, cheap coal production is continuing to come back onto the plate in conversation. In Germany alone, 12 coal-fired stations are due to open by 2020. That is seriously concerning because we're pushing to alleviate our province of coal-fired generation and bring down greenhouse gas emissions, but all the while technology is leading and the dire need to bring energy prices back into a realm of affordability—those two main things are driving other jurisdictions to revisit coal.

For goodness' sake, I ask this government to make sure that we don't waste any more time on feel-good legislation because we know that we've already committed to closing all the coal plants. But let's make sure,

for goodness' sake, that we learn from Europe, we learn from other jurisdictions and we take sure steps going forward so that energy in Ontario is affordable and reliable and that when we consider poverty in this province, we eliminate energy poverty, because I'm afraid we are going to be facing a lot of issues associated with that very concern through this winter alone.

Again, I look to the government to stand up, to lead by example, admit their mistakes, like Europe has and the UK has, possibly stand up and take a leading position and put an end to the unaffordable, unreliable green energy that we have generating through our industrial wind turbines. Do right by Ontario. This is feel-good legislation for this government of Ontario: Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use.

But for goodness' sake, let's do the right thing and bring down the cost of energy in Ontario as well. We can get it right by following the lead of Europe and of the UK. Terminate the use of industrial wind turbines, which has done nothing but increase energy costs. We're very blessed in Ontario. We have nuclear generation. We've got hydro generation. We've got a natural gas sector that's busting to fill in some gaps. So let's remember, as we go forward and we talk about energy in Ontario, that it's affordable and reliable, and we don't force people here in this amazing province between eating and heating.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Kathryn McGarry): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to talk on this final third reading of Bill 9. As you're well aware, Speaker, this bill is pretty simple. When I first saw it—I was talking to the Sergeant-at-Arms about it. There's no doubt about it: You could hold it up to the light and you could see right through the bill. We're not talking about a telephone book here; we're talking about a very simple, straightforward piece of legislation.

1620

It effectively bans the use of coal at four facilities in Ontario and exempts the use of coal where it's not used to make electricity for the grid or primarily for the grid. If you're burning coal today in your auto plant, if you're burning coal in your steel plant, and you're not making electricity, this bill does not apply to you. You can carry on tomorrow as you did the day before.

I support this bill, Speaker. I have to say I'm sympathetic to some of the comments of the critic from the official opposition, because I think we need to go much further than this bill. I wouldn't say I'm sympathetic with everything she has said, but I think we do need to go much further than simply the shutdown of coal.

There's no question that shutting down coal, something supported by all the parties in this Legislature, is an important part—or was an important part—of addressing climate change. But frankly, Speaker, we haven't seen action afterward that is on the same scale, and if we are actually going to come to grips with climate change, we

have to proceed on the scale of shutting down coal on an ongoing basis over the next few decades.

As has been noted, the plants in question are already closed, and this bill will make it more difficult for a future government to burn coal. No government will be able to start burning coal in those power plants at the simple whim of cabinet. They won't be able to make a decision late at night in a boardroom somewhere here at Queen's Park or simply at the end of an excellently catered meal around the cabinet table. They'll have to come into this chamber and they'll have to fight for it if they want to resume burning coal to make electricity. They'll have to fight for the authority to start choking people again, to start sending children with asthma to the emergency rooms again and to make our whole landscape hazy again. Those memories of smog—we need to put them behind us.

This bill is a firebreak against the return of coal. It is not a steel wall. It doesn't change our electricity system. Frankly, Speaker, I think that's where we're going to have to go. If you want to make sure we don't have future governments going back to coal, you have to do a lot more than shut down the coal plants that existed before 2003.

We need to think about the larger picture. All three parties in this Legislature supported the shutdown of coal, in large part because, as our nuclear power plants were taken out of service for refurbishment in the late 1990s, the government of the day ramped up the burning of coal to deal with the shortfall of power. That had substantial, visible, real impacts on the health of the people of this province; had substantial, real impacts on health care costs in this province; and generated a political backlash against the burning of coal.

That pollution on its own was enough to drive the impetus to shut down coal, and I'm glad that it did. But a larger issue, a longer-term issue and in many ways an issue that will be more profound for the health of the people in this province is the question of climate change.

A few months ago, we were debating the climate change resolution brought forward by the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, and I read a quote from Lord Stern, a former head economist at the World Bank, who was directed by the British government to write a report on the financial impacts of climate change. In 2006, Lord Stern reported back and talked about the necessity for action. He said this: "The investment that takes place in the next 10-20 years will have a profound" impact "on the climate in the second half of this century and in the next. Our actions now and over the coming decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century."

Now, Speaker, climate science has moved on sharply since 2006. Many in the scientific community are far more worried about what is coming than Lord Stern was in 2006. The scale of the challenge before us, the scale of the risk to our society, the scale of the risk to the lives of

people alive today and the next generations coming after us is quite substantial. We're talking about disruption of human society on an extraordinary scale. Those among us who may have lived through those events, or talked to their parents or grandparents about those events, know that, in human terms, we are engaged in a very high-stakes adventure, a very risky adventure.

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to go to London for a workshop that was put on by the United Nations Environment Programme and by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. There were parliamentarians from Bangladesh, Ghana, Botswana, Samoa, Australia, the Cook Islands, the Maldives, the Seychelles. There were people literally from around the world who were talking about their problems—their daily problems—with climate change, and they were casting about for action on a global scale to deal with it.

I have to say, when I talked to my colleagues from Bangladesh, they said that even with the two-degree centigrade maximum that the international community is trying to keep temperatures below, one third of Bangladesh will be under water and 60 million people will be displaced. They said to me that there are no climate change deniers in Bangladesh. What people are trying to figure out is how they deal with this dramatic, profound change to the life of that nation.

The representative from the Cook Islands said that three quarters of their population had already moved out, that some of the lower-lying islands were being abandoned, that the rise of the seas was causing salt contamination of freshwater wells, that people were seeing the future and it was not a good one for them.

The parliamentarian from Samoa talked about the fact that, for three years running, they had droughts that devastated their crops and, at the end of each growing season, cyclones came in and wiped out the crops that had survived. They are not talking about a distant problem. They're talking about a problem they're facing on a day-to-day basis now with a drop in their standard of living.

I had an opportunity to talk to a representative from the Philippines. She talked about the massive loss of life with the typhoon—I believe it was Haiyan—that went through a few years ago, and how the Philippines, first of all, has changed their whole approach to these massive tropical storms, recognizing the potential for large loss of life and putting in place preventative measures and emergency measures that in the last cyclone dramatically reduced loss of life.

But she said, "What we have to do, what we are doing now, is trying to move people off the shores, off the coastal areas, to further inland." And they're extraordinarily resistant because, for many of these people, their life is the sea. They go out and they fish; their whole economy is dependent on that. They want to be able to get up in the morning, walk down to the shore, take their boat out and fish. Moving inland may make it safer for them in a storm, but in terms of their day-to-day life, it is made much more difficult.

From a parliamentarian from the Seychelles, the same issue: They have some very high ground on their islands and they're starting to move people inland. The Maldives are in a much tougher spot because it's much flatter.

I had an opportunity to talk to the parliamentarian from Ghana. The major part of Ghana's electricity production is one large hydroelectric dam in the country. Two thirds of that dam is idle because the water levels have dropped so low. For them, it's a day-to-day struggle to deal with the challenges to their society and their infrastructure from the impacts of climate change.

Speaker, we here in Toronto, we here in Ontario, have been touched by climate change, and I'll address that as I go further in my speech. But so far, we've had the wealth, the insurance industry, the high ground to ensure that our loss of life has been minimal. That's not the case with many other parts of the world that are far more exposed than we are.

This problem, which many in this community see as distant, in other places is today, now, this moment. In many ways, I felt when talking to them that I could see what the future would be like for us, with people constantly trying to deal with the difficulties imposed by more extreme weather events, changing coastline, and parliamentarians who are trying to come to grips with the social conflicts and the physical constraints imposed on them by the changing climate.

1630

It's one thing to talk about people far away, on the other side of the world, but I want to talk a bit about how we've seen this manifested right here in Ontario. This March, I was going to door to door in my riding, talking to people on Gerrard Street. As you're well aware, because the climate has changed, the course of the jet stream has changed and we've been subjected to large volumes of arctic air coming into Ontario, coming into the northeastern United States. I talked to a pensioner on Gerrard Street whose hydro bill in March for the previous two months was \$1,500—more than her pension. For her, it was really an extraordinarily difficult burden placed on her back.

While we were going through temperatures of minus 20, in Anchorage, Alaska, way up there by the Arctic Circle, they were seeing plus five degrees, plus 10 degrees. That same distortion of the jet stream that brought arctic air streaming into Ontario diverted it away from Alaska for an extraordinarily mild winter. It isn't just that the world gets hotter, but that the climate and weather patterns change substantially. The weather becomes more erratic. It is more difficult to grow crops because it is very difficult to know what the weather will be from year to year.

In fact, there was an article in the New Yorker, I guess it was eight or 10 years ago—a very good science writer talking about her conversations with climatologists who looked at the change in climate at the end of the last ice age. One of things that they noticed as they went through the ice core record, as they went through the record of sediments at the bottom of lakes and of oceans, was that

the climate would change quite suddenly. You would see multi-degree rises within a decade, not slow changes over many decades; and you would see something that they called “flicker,” where the climate would go back and forth from very cold to very hot from year to year. When we see this very strong variation from year to year here in Ontario, it makes me think that we may be seeing many of the same processes that were seen at the end of the last ice age. As the world got hotter then, the world climate regime became more erratic, more unpredictable and fast-changing.

It isn’t just Toronto, obviously. You get very disruptive, very chaotic events that people notice when hurricanes go through places like Goderich. A friend of mine was in Goderich the day after the hurricane a few years ago—extreme devastation, a total shock to the people of that town. A gorgeous town, if anyone’s been there—a beautiful central square; a really nice place—just mowed down. Goderich, Superstorm Sandy going through New York City or Hurricane Katrina going through New Orleans—more and more disruptive events that have a huge impact in human terms and a huge impact financially.

Superstorm Sandy, as it’s been called, caused about \$5 billion worth of damage on the American eastern seaboard. Since that time, insurance companies on a global basis have been getting themselves ready for a \$10-billion event on the American eastern seaboard. The scale of impact is expected to continue to grow.

In the summer of 2013, Toronto was hit with some of the worst flooding ever. I want to read a bit of what the Toronto Star reported: “The storm and flash flooding that hit the GTA on July 8 has set a record for the province’s most expensive natural disaster, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada.” We’re all going to be stuck with those bills, either through higher insurance premiums or by incidental costs that aren’t covered by insurance.

I’ve already had constituents in my riding say that insurance companies have declined to renew insurance for people’s homes because they felt the homes were vulnerable to flooding; that the sewer lines in their neighbourhood weren’t adequate to protect them. So parts of their coverage would be cancelled. Now, East York is far above sea level. They don’t have to worry about the sea coming in. But they do have to worry about heavy rainstorms and hurricanes dumping volumes of water that our sewer systems, built for the weather of a century ago, are not able to handle.

In that same Star article, the Insurance Bureau of Canada’s Ontario vice-president, Ralph Palumbo, made a statement about the storm, saying, “While these preliminary estimates are staggering, we do expect them to go even higher.” He’s right; we do see very high costs.

I have to tell you, there’s more to global warming than just the cost. There’s also a smell. That smell is sewage in your basement. In Ontario, our sewer systems, our waste water systems, are built for a climate that no longer exists. Rainfall patterns are not the ones we had last

century. They’re not the ones that engineers based the sewer and water systems on. They’re becoming more and more different. Storms that used to happen once a century now happen twice a decade. That speaks to significant property damage and significant insurance costs. People are going to spend more time shovelling sewage out of their basements and they’re going to be spending more money. Global warming is hard on the nose and it’s hard on the pocketbook.

Speaker, as much as I believe it was a good idea to phase out coal, and as much as I think that this bill is useful in making sure that it’s very difficult to bring it back, I need to remind everyone in this chamber and I need to remind the government that stopping the coal shutdown is not adequate. I am very worried about our ability to meet our 2020 targets. I haven’t seen the action that would say to me that, in the next five years, we’ve got everything in place to actually meet that target. I’m very worried that the targets that are set for 2030 are ones where governments can say, “Yep, that’s 15 years from now. My career will be over. Someone else will have that headache.”

If we actually want to meet the 2020 targets, if we want to meet the 2030 targets, for reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, everything that is going to be done has to have its starting positions put in place now. If we’re concerned about climate change, global warming and the impact on our society, on our lives and the lives of our families and the lives of other people’s families, we can’t simply rest with this bill and say, “Everything is taken care of.”

We can understand those particular risks of extreme weather causing physical difficulty and extreme weather causing expense—expense for energy and expense for repairs—but there’s another level of concern that we need to start thinking about in this chamber and in this province, and that relates to financial stability.

I want to go back and talk to you about another event of financial instability that we have to recognize and incorporate into our thinking. I’ll just explain a bit of background, Speaker, and then I’ll bring it back to the question of greenhouse gas emissions—oil, gas and coal. That’s the 2008 financial collapse related to subprime mortgages. If you ever have the chance, Speaker, there’s a fabulous book you should read, *The Big Short*, by a writer called Michael Lewis—a great storyteller, very colourful prose, very solid on the facts. He followed the growth in understanding amongst people dealing with the international financial system who came to understand that at the heart of the financial system, there was this huge chunk of rotten, dangerous assets that people had invested hundreds of billions, possibly trillions, in: sub-prime mortgages.

A number of analysts, in those years leading up to 2008, actually went and looked at those assets. They looked at those subprime mortgages in Phoenix, Orange county, San Diego and all over the United States: mortgages that had been given by mortgage companies that took a cut and passed them on to investors. They

didn't care about the quality. It was really irrelevant to them. All they cared about was getting their cut and passing on this toxic brew of subprime assets. Pensions, banks, people who felt they were investing in grade A, creditworthy assets, were totally—what I can say?—oblivious to the risk they were taking. In 2008, all of that came apart. There were staggering losses globally. As you're well aware, Speaker, governments around the world had to prop up the financial system—around the world. We were lucky; we didn't get a Great Depression. We did suffer and are still suffering the aftermath of what's called the great recession, but I'm not sure that we learned our lesson from the 2008 subprime mortgage debacle.

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I want to give you some background, because we're facing similar investment risks with oil, gas and coal. For those who have not followed the literature on this, I'll note a report that was provided by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario a number of months ago. He talked about the need for a planetary carbon diet—call it a carbon budget, if you will. In 2009, the global community, through the United Nations, adopted a ceiling that we would not go past in terms of global warming: two degrees centigrade. I referred to that earlier in my remarks. When you go past that, you start getting very dangerous, very unpredictable climatic events, most likely irreparable.

There's an awful lot of concern globally in government circles and in scientific circles that action needs to be taken to stay within that two-degree boundary. Now, as the Environmental Commissioner wrote, we're already about halfway to that threshold. We're already seeing the impact of an almost one-degree increase. We're seeing extreme storms and we're seeing substantially more erratic weather patterns.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released calculations regarding a global carbon budget. How much can we afford to burn and still stay within that two-degree cap on global warming? How much can we burn before we go over the red line? Their calculation was that to have a reasonable chance of staying within that two-degree-centigrade increase, the global economy could only generate what they called 1,000 gigatonnes. A gigatonne is a billion tonnes of CO₂ for future use.

At the current worldwide rate of CO₂ release, this global budget will be exhausted in about 28 years. We'd have to stop entirely in order to stay within that budget. That is a very short time frame in the life of a society, very short. I'll give you an example: The Wright brothers flew their first heavier-than-air aircraft in about 1903. Maybe I'm a year off one way or the other, but around then. Thirty years later, 1933, you had airline companies that were providing service across oceans. Twenty-eight years, 30 years is not a long time. There's a huge disparity between that budget that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change worked out and the amount of greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuels that are on the books of global oil, coal and gas companies.

In 2012, the World Energy Outlook, published by the International Energy Agency, a fairly well-respected and well-regarded international institution, estimated that the remaining global reserves of all fossil fuels in the ground—that's coal, oil and natural gas—would emit 2,900 gigatonnes of CO₂ if they were all burned. If the threshold is 1,000 and what people have on their books—what companies have on their books—is 2,900, then about two thirds of the fossil fuel reserves that global companies are depending on to show that they're financially stable are going to have to stay in the ground. That raises huge questions because as you may well imagine, if an oil company says, "The value of all my reserves has to be cut by two thirds," then their stock value plummets.

A few years ago, I think BP revalued their oil reserves and showed they were 10% to 15% lower than they'd previously estimated, and the value of the stock plummeted. That's because the value of these companies is dependent on the reserves that they have on hand. The reality now is that they may not be able to burn all the reserves that they have, effectively devaluing those companies.

Within Canada, the Toronto Stock Exchange composite index is one of the most carbon-intensive stock indices in the world. In 2013, the TSX had over 400 companies listed in the oil and gas sector, representing a market capitalization of their total value or worth—here I'm quoting the Environmental Commissioner—of around \$400 billion to \$500 billion. The Environmental Commissioner stressed in his report that investors, pension plans—and many of us have great interest in pension plans—and insurance companies had to start looking at these areas of investment through a climate lens because they were putting their funds at risk by investing in these companies. Pension plans were putting their funds at risk—future pensions—by putting money in these companies.

Several authoritative international organizations, including the International Energy Agency, Carbon Tracker, the United Nations, and the HSBC—Hongkong and Shanghai Banking company, a bank you may be familiar with, one that operates in this country and in this town—are warning investors to focus this lens quickly and act accordingly, to avoid another kind of catastrophe: an economic one.

We saw, in 2008, that investors had sunk hundreds of billions into assets that weren't worth what the vendors said they were. We're in a situation now where oil, gas and coal companies are making a bet that the world will never act on climate change. That's their bet. The companies are based on that bet, financed on that bet, sell bonds on that bet. Their whole value is based on a bet that nothing will be done.

If they're right on that bet, it's disastrous for us. If they're wrong on that bet, it's disastrous for their bottom lines, for their financial statements, and for everyone whose investment portfolio, including big pension funds headquartered here in this province—it's a threat to those companies that have built their foundation on those industries.

So this is not a minor or tangential issue. This is a huge risk area for us. The Bank of England is now seriously turning to the question of what they call stranded assets—this coal, oil and gas that can't be burned—and unburnable carbon, given the major role that the London financial markets have in financing fossil fuel investment around the world.

In October 2014, the British paper the *Guardian* reported: “The governor of the Bank of England has reiterated his warning that fossil fuel companies cannot burn all of their reserves if the world is to avoid catastrophic climate ... impacts of their decisions.

“According to reports,” Mark Carney, head of the Bank of England, “told a World Bank seminar on integrated reporting on Friday”—Friday of that October—“that the ‘vast majority of reserves are unburnable’ if global temperature rises are to be limited” to two degrees centigrade.

The governor of the Bank of England understands the kinds of risks that oil, gas and coal companies pose to the international financial system, just as subprime mortgages posed that risk, that threat, less than a decade ago. A decade ago, a number of people very smartly understood the risk, and they got out of that market. They saved themselves. Some of them made a lot of money by betting against the companies that didn’t understand what was going on. There were a whole bunch of banks and investors—people remember the names Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers—that got hit profoundly, and many countries took a profound hit from those unstable and risky assets.

We have to understand and protect ourselves against the risk in terms of our physical experience of the world. We have to act to protect ourselves from the climate change that will destabilize our society. But we also have to understand it in terms of controlling our cost of living and cost of energy, and we have to understand it in terms of financial risk.

At this point, I don’t believe that this government understands those risks, and I’m confident that they’re not preparing for those risks. I look forward to being shown something different.

This bill, the one before us, as I said at the beginning, is a small firewall against a bad practice. But if we’re actually going to take on the challenges before us, we need continuous, substantial steps towards changing our energy system. We have to move beyond oil, gas and coal.

The good thing is that the cost of conservation is already far less than the cost of electricity, for example. You can effectively reduce your need for electricity services at a cost of three to six cents a kilowatt hour.

I did a quick calculation on my electricity bill before the most recent rate increases came into effect. When I factored in the distribution and the regulatory charges and all that, I was paying about 21 cents a kilowatt hour. That’s a lot of money, Speaker—a lot of money.

At the same time, the market for energy is changing in a profound way. In the United States, renewable energy

prices are dropping dramatically. In the United States, the cost of solar power is competitive with or lower than electrical power from the grid in Hawaii, and on track to be competitive in Arizona and California within the next few years.

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In fact, within five years, solar power is projected to be cheaper than grid power in about 20 American states, and banks are noticing. Banks are noticing the potential for disruption—technological disruption, economic disruption—of the existing energy systems.

Speaker, my bet is that at one point in your life you rented a video from Blockbuster Video. I think it’s probably a pretty good bet that at one point you put down your five bucks. Maybe I’m wrong, but I think there’s a very good chance that many people in this room, in the past, rented a film from Blockbuster Video. My bet is that you can’t find one of them anywhere now because they’re gone. They met Netflix and the game was over.

Disruptive technologies eliminate whole areas of the economy. We’ve seen them before. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when there was talk about bringing mobile phones to Ontario, I remember reading stories in the *Globe and Mail* about investors speculating whether or not this mobile phone thing would actually take off—“Is it worth putting the money in or not?” Some eventually got into mobile phones. Some still have very old-style phones in their hands. I remember meeting in the early 1980s with a fellow who was doing construction in a co-op that I was working at. He brought in his mobile phone, and he was sort of tilted over because the battery was about the size of a car battery. It looked kind of like one of those older rotary phones. There was a lot of skepticism at the time that this would catch on, but things moved on. Things moved on, and big telephone and communications companies that didn’t actually adapt to, prepare for or deal with mobile technology took huge losses.

We have to understand that that is happening in the energy area with regard to renewable energy, with new technologies and micro-grids that are going to change the way people use energy and make energy in North America.

Earlier in 2014, Barclays bank downgraded the whole electricity sector in the United States. They looked at that sector and said, “Hmm, Blockbuster Video, we’ve seen this movie before. We’re not going to put as much money into this sector as we have before.”

John Spears, the fabulous energy reporter for the *Toronto Star*, who I believe is not writing there anymore, wrote a very good article in the *Star’s* business section. He quoted Barclays, saying, “In the 100-plus-year history of the electric utility industry, there has never before been a truly cost-competitive substitute available for grid power.

“We believe that solar plus storage could reconfigure the organization and regulation of the electric power business over the coming decade.”

"A combination of solar and storage is already competitive with grid power in Hawaii, Barclays said, and the trend will only grow."

"California could follow in 2017, New York and Arizona in 2018, and many other states soon after."

"Barclays sees near-term credit risk for utilities where solar power is gaining traction. And it sees long-term risks 'from a comprehensive reimaging of the role utilities play in providing electric power.'"

Barclays bank, last year, understood the potential scale of disruption of the electricity industry, understands the potential for solar power and other renewable technologies to make nuclear, coal, oil and gas electricity production uncompetitive.

Already in Germany, a country where there's not an awful lot of sunshine, solar power is producing power for houses at a cost of between nine euro cents and 12 euro cents per kilowatt hour. Speaker, that's a lot cheaper than peak power in Ontario.

In Abu Dhabi, which is looking at vast investment in solar power to provide electricity and to provide power for desalination, they're signing contracts for electricity provided by solar panels at less than six cents a kilowatt hour.

When Al Gore was speaking here at the Climate Summit of the Americas in July, he talked about a mining company in Arizona that had signed a contract for solar power for electricity at under five cents a kilowatt hour.

Speaker, the reality of electricity production, the reality of demand for fossil fuels is changing dramatically and has the potential to change even more dramatically. We in Ontario need to take advantage of those shifts.

It's a good thing to stop burning coal; it's a good thing to have a law prohibiting that. I'm happy to vote for this bill. My caucus colleagues are happy to vote for this bill. But I have to say that, just as Franklin Delano Roosevelt had to take far more substantial steps than simply passing one or two small laws to bring the United States back to some sort of economic viability, after four years of the Great Depression, this government or a future government is going to have to be far more active and change things far more profoundly if we're actually going to keep climate change within—what can I say—survivable bounds, if we're actually going to protect the air that people breathe in this province in the years to come.

I appreciate the measures that have been taken. I'm looking for measures far more substantial to continue getting rid of emissions on the same scale as they were reduced with the elimination of coal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity for just a couple of minutes to speak to Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use. I must admit that I wonder why the government really needs this bill. It's a one-page bill to make sure, I guess, that they don't generate electricity

with coal. But we've seen so many promises to do with coal over the years.

I'm sure the member from St. Catharines would probably remember the original promise to shut down coal-fired generation. I had to go back and check, because I thought, "I've heard this so many times before." But it was actually 2003—the 2003 election. The promise that was made did seem a little silly at the time, because they promised in the 2003 election that they would shut down coal by 2007 and replace it using clean sources. Now, they would have had to have been pretty darned efficient to actually accomplish that promise. As it turned out, that promise was made many, many more times over time, and some eight years later, after the 2007 election, it was actually achieved.

I'm not sure this bill is something that's really required. Governments get elected, and particularly a majority government can basically do what they wish. For example, when the current government got elected, there was the Taxpayer Protection Act that the Mike Harris government had brought in to make sure that future governments balanced budgets. Well, when the current government was elected and didn't feel like balancing the budget, they just repealed the Taxpayer Protection Act and, as we know, have run up some pretty significant deficits, doubling the debt of the province in the past number of years. So I do question, really, whether this bill is actually necessary.

When I was looking back in 2003, there were a few other promises too: We'll not sell off the electricity grid; we'll not sell any publicly owned generating stations. Things seem to have changed in the recent years.

Of course, we have the cap-and-trade system that's being proposed right now. I must admit that I met with an interested citizens group wanting to educate me on different measures to try to reduce carbon use, and they were basically proposing some sort of carbon fee that was fully refundable to the citizens, more or less along the lines of what BC has done in the last number of years. BC has a carbon tax of, I believe, \$30 a tonne, but it's revenue-neutral. It's given back to people and corporations in the form of tax reductions so it doesn't harm the economy. I think that's really critical, and it's really simple and straightforward. That seems to make a lot more sense to me than the complicated cap-and-trade system that is open to gaming and didn't work in Europe, which is being proposed by the government.

I was asking this group that was educating me, "Why do you think they want cap and trade?" I think the suspicion is that the extra revenue that's going to be generated is just going into the general fund somewhere, and who knows what's going to happen? Or maybe it's going to be used to balance the budget. When that happens, it will hurt the economy, because it will be a new tax, it won't be revenue-neutral and maybe it won't accomplish anything. So I'm a little concerned about the government implementing that. Especially, they're again setting a very ambitious target of a timeline. I've heard

that people are really concerned and industries are really concerned. I'm the mining critic; mining is really concerned that they're not going to get it right if they try to rush it and don't take the time to do it properly. So I do have a lot of concerns with that.

But we are talking about Bill 9 today, the one-page bill. Frankly, I'm not sure that it's really necessary, so I think I'll end debate there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Murray has moved third reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No? You guys have to shout. I'll do this again. Shout, please, because it's hard to hear you over here.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've been told by the table that there was a no and I missed it.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I've been handed a deferral slip. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote will be deferred to Monday, November 23 after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for the record, because I want to make sure that it's understood, this has happened a number of times in this particular spot. We have never been given a chance, even though we said no on other bills, to get a division. In this case, the government forgets, and all of a sudden they get different treatment. I don't think that's right. We should all be treated the same. If the government forgot to divide their own bill, that's their fault, not mine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank you for that particular comment and your point of order. In the past, when I have not heard, I've always tried to confirm with the table that I did hear something or missed something. I make my decisions based on what I've heard or the advice of the table, and that's what I did again. I've been consistent.

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On division.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1703.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergeant d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglington–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cootsville / Mississauga-Est–Cootsville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 November 2015

Lundi 23 novembre 2015



**Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac**

**Président
L'honorable Dave Levac**

**Clerk
Deborah Deller**

**Greffière
Deborah Deller**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As we do our introductions, today we have with us a former member from Thornhill, in the 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. Peter Shurman. Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'm pleased to announce that Andrew Roberts is here with us today. Andrew, would you stand, please. Andrew is joining my office as executive assistant as of today.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Joining us today in the House are members of our legislative page Aaran Suthakar's family. We have Aaran's mother, Menaka; his father, Kandappu; his brother Gajan; and his grandfather Siva. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure today to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Mr. Tim Schindel, visiting us today, representing Leading Influence. I know he's going to meet with many members here today.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce Anthony Silva and Geneviève Fortier from the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, as you know, today is youth homelessness day. Joining us from the Oakville United Way is Kathryn Fleischer. Please give her a warm Queen's Park welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome all the members from the Ontario Real Estate Association who are joining us for question period this morning, in particular, a former staff member, Adam Yahn, who's been known to patrol the blue line for the Ontario Legiskaters.

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to also welcome to the Legislature today two individuals from the Sault Ste. Marie Real Estate Board, Andrea Gagne and Rob Trembinski.

As well, I want to recognize Matthew Thornton, government relations, from OREA, who's here today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome and thank Ian Stedman, Chantelle Willson and Jennifer Hamilton, and their families, for joining me here this morning as I launch my rare disease private member's motion.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I am so proud to welcome today three people from the United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington. I have Bhavana Varma, president and CEO; Kim Hockey, the director of com-

munity initiatives; Derek Brown, the youth engagement coordinator; and Jenn Goodwin, the United Way KFLA board member and director of communications at Providence Care, and her son Alec.

We also have Cody Allan, youth council member on ending youth homelessness in Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington.

We have, as well, Matthias Leuprecht, who is a student volunteer in my office and he's the new youth engagement chair of our riding association. Welcome all.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce representatives from the Woodstock-Ingersoll and District Real Estate Board who are here with us: William Cattle, Nicole Bowman, Isaak Friesen and David Bellaire. We welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome Michael Braithwaite, Dr. Sylvain Roy, Adrian Bain, Amal Hanna and Erin Boudreau, who are all here for Youth Homelessness Awareness Day. Welcome to Queen's Park, all.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Justin Bates, Evan Martinelli and Joseph Hanna, who are here representing neighbourhood pharmacies. They're having a reception tonight in the dining room. I hope everyone can make it out.

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to welcome this morning representatives from the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada who are here for their Queen's Park day: Denise Carpenter, Karen Wolfe, Elaine Akers, Kevin Comeau and Lawrence Varga. They're having a reception tonight so please stop by.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to introduce to the House today a community activist from Newmarket-Aurora, Darryl Wolk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to introduce page captain Ajay Narayan's mother, Surita Narayan; father, Camaron Narayan; grandparents Dai Narayan, Dharma Narayan, Malini Tiwari and Henjay Tiwari; and their family friend, Ferdinand Fortune. They are in the public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in both the east and west galleries here today are students from Don Valley East and one of the best schools in all of Ontario, École élémentaire Jeanne-Lajoie.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome, from the Cornwall and District Real Estate Board: Robert Juhasz and Dani Tedesco-Derouchie. They're not here yet, but they will be coming in. They're here to stop the new tax coming through.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome today, from the Ontario Real Estate Association, Wendy Giroux; Mike Heffernan from the Peterborough real estate association;

and Debbie Vernon from Muskoka-Haliburton. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF SCARVES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear scarves as part of the United Way campaign to eliminate youth homelessness. I would also like to request that you come to the grand staircase to assemble for a picture after question period, and come to our reception in room 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll try to capture most of that.

The member from Kingston and the Islands is seeking unanimous consent to wear scarves in honour of a campaign from the United Way, with a request to meet for a photo after question period. Do we agree? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated Tuesday, November 3, 2015, the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall be authorized to meet on Monday, November 23, 2015, following public hearings on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act; and on Tuesday, November 24, 2015, during its regularly scheduled meeting times, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that notwithstanding the order dated—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further unanimous consents, it's now time for question period.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Premier continues to defend paying the Hydro One CEO \$4 million. She is now defending this gold-plated paycheque by comparing it to corporate

America. The Premier can't find a single hydro company anywhere in Canada that would pay a similar salary.

Mr. Speaker, will the Acting Premier give us one comparable in Canada to justify this outrageous salary?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted that the Leader of the Opposition is here and asking questions, but I sure wish he would ask a question about the infrastructure that will be built with the revenue generated from broadening the ownership of Hydro One. The truth is, Speaker, that the party opposite has absolutely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I seek to hear both question and answer.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: He isn't asking about building infrastructure. He isn't asking about building hospitals. He isn't asking about expanding natural gas across the province. He isn't asking about Connecting Links. Speaker, on this side—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. If the shouting continues, I'll move right to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this side of the House, we have a plan to build the infrastructure that this province needs. On that side of the House, they're great at criticizing, but they have no plan to build the infrastructure that they are actually lobbying for every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: There is no new infrastructure money. Your plan is the same pre and post the hydro fire sale. Let me ask the question again: Can you give me one comparable—one comparable—anywhere in Canada? You won't find it in BC, as their top three executive salaries combine to make just half that of the Hydro One CEO. You can't look next door to Quebec, because their CEO makes one eighth of the Hydro One CEO's salary.

How did this government sign off on this paycheque? Give me one justification of how you think a \$4-million salary is appropriate. No more spin, no more distraction—it's not about infrastructure—justify the salary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Part of our plan is to make sure that Hydro One becomes a better company, a stronger company, a more efficient company, with stronger management, committed to improved customer service and improved performance. Taxpayers will continue to benefit from the changes we are making, as the 40% share we continue to hold will generate revenue to the public. We have struck the right balance. The compensation is in line with other energy companies, but this is about better customer service. I know that your caucus hears the same stories about how Hydro One should be and could be a much stronger company.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: You say it's comparable to other energy CEOs, but you won't mention a single example.

People in Ontario are living in energy poverty. Tonight, a senior citizen in rural Ontario will have to choose between having a healthy meal for dinner or turning on the heat to keep their house warm. At the same time that this government continues to turn its back on these seniors, the Premier has somehow found the money to pay their Hydro One CEO \$4 million.

How can this government look in the eyes of seniors in rural Ontario who can't pay their energy bills and justify the salary?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows, or certainly should know, that we have significant support for low-income Ontarians to help deal with their energy bills. The examples that the Leader of the Opposition continues to use are examples of people who will be the beneficiaries of the programs for families.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program is a new program. I hope he is urging his constituents to enrol in the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It will save them an additional \$360 a year off their bill, or \$430 when combined with the removal of the debt retirement charge. We are focused on the energy needs of low-income Ontarians, and I hope that the members opposite are informing their constituents about the relief that is available to them.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Acting Premier. The government is well aware that there are over 200,000 senior citizens living with Alzheimer's disease in Ontario. The current strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias on the government web page is just four bullet points with no real action or plan. For example, the second bullet point says "invest in long-term-care homes," and clearly that isn't happening. Actually, only six facilities in the province have units for seniors who need behavioural supports because of Alzheimer's disease. The wait-lists are getting longer and longer.

Can the government tell us when we will see a plan and action on Alzheimer's?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to begin by saying that the province has already embarked on a province-wide strategy to look at dementia. An expert panel has already been called and it's making its way through and doing its consultations under the leadership of the parliamentary assistant, Indira Naidoo-Harris.

In the meantime, I'd like to remind the Leader of the Opposition—in fact, I'm happy to invite him to showcase the number of investments we have been making in long-term-care homes across this province. Very recently, I was in Waterloo for the opening of a brand new facility, which was also attended by members of his caucus. Be-

fore that I was in Windsor, again for the opening of a brand new long-term-care facility. We're talking about close to 500 beds in the last three months that I have witnessed opening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier—and I would invite the minister to actually speak to the families who don't have the care for a loved one.

In 1999, a PC government introduced Ontario's Alzheimer strategy. It was the first of its kind in Canada, and it was a strategy that wasn't renewed by the Liberal government in 2004. It was a strategy that was actually commended and highlighted in the 2010 Rising Tide report by the Alzheimer society.

According to last week's coroner's report, the majority of residents in long-term-care homes have dementia. If that doesn't spark action from this government, they must have no heart. The government has the responsibility to help these families. Will the government provide the House with a commitment that they'll have more than simply four bullet points for dealing with Alzheimer's—that they'll deliver to the House, they'll deliver to Ontario, a real strategy for dealing with Alzheimer's?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I know that the Minister of Health would also have a lot he would like to add, but as I've already said, we have embarked on a province-wide strategy to look at dementia for the entire province, not just in long-term-care homes, but at the continuum of care, because we know that people who have dementia don't just live in long-term-care homes; they also live in the community. What we have done is come out with a proposal that broadly looks at dementia and Alzheimer's, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but across the world.

Because we have an aging population, yes, the incidence of Alzheimer's and dementia is increasing. We have recognized that and we have already put in place an expert panel that is crafting a province-wide strategy. Let's just wait for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: Enough expert panels, enough talk—you've had 12 years. The last report expired over a decade ago.

I was at the Alzheimer's gala last week and people were telling me their stories, their concerns about how their loved ones don't have care.

I can relate personally. I saw my maternal grandmother pass away from Alzheimer's disease. I lived with her; I saw it. It's painful. So I'm asking the government to be serious about this. Listen to the former MPP—your Liberal MPP—Donna Cansfield, who tried three times to convince the Legislature to act. All she said after the failed attempts to get this government to act was that you've got an ethical, moral case that tells you that you have to do something. You should do something.

So I ask the minister: Will you do something? No talking points—will you actually act and make Ontario a leader?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I know that the Minister of Health also has something to add, so I'm going to refer the question to him.

1050

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know it's the job of the official opposition to paint a picture of inaction, but the truth is that we're providing that leadership, we're providing the funding to our important community partners—\$18 million last year to the Alzheimer society.

We're working nationally, as well. I was at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting just last fall, where we made a decision to develop a national strategy for Alzheimer's. I think the member opposite would agree that it's important that we have that continuity and consistency in leadership right across the country. With the hard work of my parliamentary assistant the member from Halton, we're updating our strategy for Alzheimer's and for dementias across the board in this province. We're consulting with stakeholders.

But we've invested more than \$1 billion since 2011 in our Aging at Home Strategy—over the last four years, Mr. Speaker—and \$59 million alone for behavioural supports in our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The temperature is dropping, and there are families across Ontario who rely on electricity to heat their homes. For families who rely on baseboard heating to keep warm at this time of year, whether that's a house in Thunder Bay or an apartment here in Toronto, higher rates will have a devastating impact on their ability to make ends meet.

Since the Premier decided to sell off Hydro One, prices continue to go up. Will the Acting Premier, on behalf of this Liberal government, promise Ontarians that selling off Hydro One won't mean skyrocketing hydro bills for people who need to heat their homes this winter?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has raised the issue that we have been very concerned about too, and that is the issue of hydro prices. That's why we have taken action—I have to say, supported by neither of the opposition parties—to lower the burden on people, particularly those with the lowest incomes.

Let's look at what we have done. We have made the decision—and it's a decision that actually was celebrated by the former Prime Minister during the last election campaign as if he had done it himself—to close the coal-fired plants. There is a cost to that, but there is an enormous benefit. I think everyone here understands the benefit of improved health from closing those coal-fired plants, not to mention what it does for the province.

We are helping families by removing the debt retirement charge—a legacy tax from when Harris was in government—two years earlier than planned, saving the average family \$70 a month on their hydro bills. As I mentioned earlier, we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The prices, the rates are going up 20% already. They've gone up 25% between last winter and this winter, regardless of what your income is. It's hitting everyone. Everyone's bills are going up.

Ontario families are worried that the selling-off of Hydro One is going to mean the bills go even higher. The government has tabled legislation that could stop independent consumer groups from fighting for lower rates at the OEB. The government is giving another leg up to well-connected Liberal friends, but making life more expensive for families paying the bills.

Will this Acting Premier tell Ontarians just how much more it's going to cost people to heat their homes because of the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me just continue with some of the programs that are in place now. The Ontario Electricity Support Program: I really do want to take this opportunity to encourage all MPPs to inform their constituents of this. It will save low-to-modest-income families an average of \$360 a year. The discount will be applied directly to their hydro bill.

In addition, we have the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, saving individuals up to \$993 a year, and up to \$1,131 for seniors. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program provides emergency financial support of up to \$600 for families and individuals having trouble paying their bills. The saveONenergy Home Assistance Program helps consumers manage energy costs by providing energy efficiency assessments. And of course the Northern Ontario Energy Credit helps low-to-middle-income families and individuals living in Ontario, saving individuals \$143 a year, \$221 for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Many times this Liberal government has claimed that hydro rates are out of their hands, but they are enacting new legislation that could stop consumer groups from taking their cases to the Ontario Energy Board to fight for fairer rates. The new private sector owners of Hydro One can apply for hydro rate increases all they want, and there's no protection for consumers here in Ontario.

Will this Acting Premier tell Ontarians why this government is muzzling independent voices who are trying to stand up for the people of Ontario, who are trying to stand up for lower rates?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be very clear: Hydro One does not have the power to set rates. That continues to rest with the independent Ontario Energy Board—the open and transparent OEB; that's how they engage. Furthermore, the government has introduced legislation

to strengthen and enhance the OEB's powers even further to protect ratepayers, increase accountability and improve transparency.

Here are some examples. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase. They received a 3% reduction of their capital request. Then, in 2011, the OPG also applied for a rate increase. They were denied their request and lowered those rates.

Interjection.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Furthermore—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me—second time, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Supreme Court of Canada recently reaffirmed the right of the OEB to ensure consumers pay just and reasonable rates for electricity. We are in a competitive market.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OEB might be getting stronger, but consumer advocates are getting weaker because of what this government is doing. That's what's happening with the legislation he referenced.

My next question is for the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier explain why the Liberal government won't rule out even more asset sales?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do acknowledge that the leader of the third party has been asking about this. We have been very transparent about our determination to broaden the ownership of Hydro One so we can generate revenue to pay for important infrastructure investments, including in her home community of Hamilton.

We do have assets. We are optimizing the value of those assets. We have real estate that we don't need to own. We had GM shares that we have sold. We are broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I certainly didn't hear a clear and transparent answer to my first question. The Liberals are obviously not prepared to rule out selling off more of our public assets. That means that selling more money-making, revenue-generating assets is on the table.

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians exactly what they, the Liberals of Ontario, are getting ready to put on the auction block next?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been very open and we have been transparent. This plan was in our 2014 budget, our fall economic statement, our 2015 budget and our platform. We have said that we're looking at the LCBO head office, we are looking at Hydro One, we are looking at OPG's head office building, as well as the Seaton lands and the Lakeview lands, and that we're not looking at the LCBO, we are not looking at OPG. We are not looking at any of those assets. We will not be selling Niagara Falls power station, we will not be selling Darlington or Pickering nuclear, amongst others.

What we will be investing in is the infrastructure that this province needs. We're determined to do that. We will make the tough decisions so that we can build the infrastructure the people of this province need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In October 2014, the Premier of this province pretty much said the same thing about Hydro One, and look where we are now. Hydro One is being sold off. So excuse me if I have a little bit of a lack of trust in what this member just said.

The Liberal sell-off of Hydro One is a mess. The FAO says that the sale will only raise about \$1.4 billion for infrastructure, less than half of the \$4 billion that the government claims. The government has to count money that it can't spend. The FAO has shown that it will increase the debt. The province of Ontario will be losing half a billion dollars each and every year in revenue, and the government cannot deny that rates are actually going to go through the roof.

When will this Liberal government actually learn from their failures, stop any further sell-off of Hydro One and make a firm commitment not to sell any further revenue-generating assets?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite just made reference to a situation that is not a fact. She claims we are only going to get \$1.4 billion in capital appreciation out of this corporation to reinvest. We've already netted \$3 billion of that—going to reinvest in our economy, into new assets, into new revenue and new opportunities, and that's with only 15% of broadening ownership.

We still own 85%, or, in this case, actually 84% of the company, which is now increasing in even greater value and dividends to the province. That's a good thing. It's a good thing because it's creating greater wealth, greater opportunities and greater prosperity for all Ontarians.

At the same time, it's independently monitored by the OEB to ensure that rates do not skyrocket. Those are the control measures that are put in place.

More importantly: Dollar for dollar, it's being re-invested into our economy, into new assets, for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

LAND TRANSFER TAX

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The minister claims that his plan to hit homebuyers with a \$10,000 land transfer tax is all about helping municipalities. But if he's paying attention, he knows that an increasing number of mayors are speaking out against this tax. They know what we know: that this will make Ontario the most uncompetitive tax jurisdiction in North America to buy a home. That's bad news for a housing sector that creates thousands of jobs and drives important investment in our communities.

Speaker, does the minister agree that a municipal land transfer tax will hurt the economy by slowing down home sales?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to begin my answer by reminding the member opposite that it was the previous PC government that burdened Ontario's 444 municipalities by downloading, without providing any additional resource, \$3.2 billion in costs—

Mr. Jim Wilson: What have you done in 12 years, Ted?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey, please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Obviously, we've touched a sensitive nerve.

We're doing our best to reverse that. We're working hard at that.

I just want to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, that after every municipal election we review the Municipal Elections Act. It's no secret that one of the concerns our beleaguered municipalities have is around revenue and the choices as to how they will raise revenue.

We're having that discussion with them. We've made no decisions yet. It's the same answer I provided before. The member opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Obviously, the minister's spokesperson didn't write his notes today. He told the Mississauga News that his boss's tax will result in fewer homes being sold.

The minister isn't listening to me when it comes to stopping the imposition of any new municipal land transfer taxes, but maybe he'll listen to the other Steve Clarke. Here's what Steve Clarke, mayor of Orillia, told the Barrie Advance about this tax: "It could potentially hurt economic development in that it would create a disincentive for somebody wanting to buy a house, land or business."

Speaker, Steve Clarke is right. Will the minister take Mayor Clarke's advice and support my motion on December 3 to close the door on this home ownership tax for good?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: They've got more nerve than Dick Tracy over there, I think.

Let me be clear: Ontario is not going to impose any new tax, nor are we going to facilitate a municipal land transfer tax. We believe that municipalities are mature. They're democratically elected. They're looking for new revenue tools. We're having that discussion, and we'll make a decision based on that.

Shame on the member opposite, given the history of the PC Party, for ranting up the rhetoric on this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —when he knows, or ought to know, that, save the \$3.2-billion download, municipalities would be in much better shape today.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier and President of the Treasury Board.

Last week, as part of yet another omnibus budget bill from this government, the so-called progressive Liberals continue to pay back well-connected insiders and friends by releasing corporate giant EllisDon from a long-standing obligation to hire unionized workers province-wide. Strangely, this government is reintroducing a Conservative bill that the Premier herself voted against just last year.

Speaker, can the Acting Premier tell us specifically who it consulted with on this schedule of this bill, and explain to workers in this province why the government has once again introduced the EllisDon bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this question, which I had anticipated. What we're doing with this legislation is we're providing the authority to the government to make changes to implement a settlement that was reached by the arbitrator in a process that has been ongoing. It has made its way through the OLRB; it has made its way through the courts. At one point in the past, it appeared we were heading down the road that one side may get everything it wanted and the other side would get nothing at all.

With what we're proposing to do with the legislation when it comes forward and with the regulation when it comes forward is ensure that both sides are treated fairly in this regard. We've had one of the best arbitrators in the country working on this file. He has met with all parties involved with this. He has brought me some recommendations that I will be bringing to the House at a later date that I think will result in a much fairer settlement than was anticipated before.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd say only that 1% is going to be making out okay in this deal. Let's not forget that two separate appeal courts have upheld this 60-year agreement, and now this government is legislating. The problem is, it favours one party. That party happens to be a major donor to the Liberal Party. Never mind the Labour Relations Board; never mind the two courts of appeal; never mind the court of public opinion. It begs the question: Who really is in charge in Ontario?

Will this progressive Premier explain why she's gifting legislation to a major corporate donor that would further erode the rights to collective bargaining in this province?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the honourable member for that question. At every possible opportunity, I personally, and the members of my staff at the Ministry of Labour, attempted to facilitate a settlement that all parties could agree to. The arbitrator sat down with the groups over a weekend and they were able to hash out a deal that was agreed to by the parties in the room. They took it out for ratification. One group was able to get it ratified and the other one was not. At the end of this, we called them back together again and asked them to sit down to see if they could work out a deal because I knew I was dealing with people that did want to achieve a settlement.

Despite best efforts, we were unable to reach a ratified deal within the room, but the arbitrator has reported back to me. He has asked me that, when I make a decision to bring in the regulation, I will be directed by the settlement that was reached within that room.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Many young people in my riding of York South-Weston speak about the challenges they face in preparing for the labour market. I often hear that they lack the necessary skills and training that they need to find and keep good jobs. This is especially the case for young people who face multiple barriers to employment resulting from some combination of challenging life circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the minister recently announced the launch of a new youth jobs program: Youth Job Connection. Can the minister please inform the members of this House on how this new program will help our most vulnerable youth access the necessary training and employment services to find meaningful jobs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from York South-Weston for that question. Last month I was proud to announce the launch of Youth Job Connection, a new targeted program that will provide intensive support and training to youth who face the greatest challenges finding employment.

I am proud to say that our government is investing more than \$160 million over two years to help over 27,000 youth across the province of Ontario to access a number of employment and training services. This program will be delivered at more than 130 Employment Ontario service locations across the province. It will have two components: a year-round component, which will help youth aged 15 to 29, and a summer component, which will provide high school students with summer job opportunities as well as part-time work during the school year.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue investing in evidence-based programs to help connect our young people to the job opportunities they need to succeed.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

All Ontarians, regardless of their background or circumstances, should have access to effective employment and training programs that give them the skills they need to succeed.

It is reassuring that a program like Youth Job Connection will provide much-needed intensive support to help young people access the labour market. I understand that this program is part of our government's \$250-million reinvestment in Ontario's renewed youth jobs strategy, which will help support a comprehensive suite of new youth employment programs.

Many constituents in my riding of York South-Weston would like to know more about some of the other innovative employment and training programs that will be made available to young people. Can the minister inform the members of this House of the different programs that will be included in this new suite of youth job programs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Youth Job Connection is part of a comprehensive suite of new programs that will more effectively serve young people across a broader spectrum of needs and in more locations across the province of Ontario.

Youth Job Link, which will be launched next spring, is a program that will help youth who face fewer barriers for employment. I am pleased to say that every single service provider across the province of Ontario which belongs to the Employment Ontario network will be invited to deliver Youth Job Link.

We are also making an additional \$25-million investment in Employment Service to help employers provide more on-the-job training and trial job placements for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, young people and their employers across the province of Ontario will be better served than ever with more than 30 government of Ontario programs now in place to help youth build skills and find jobs.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Ontarians are now being bombarded with a new ad campaign promoting the Liberals' latest energy price shell game. When one shell game ends, a new one begins. The Ontario Electricity Support Program is just the most recent version of diversion and confusion when it comes to energy pricing. It is nothing more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. It pits one energy-poor family against another energy-poor family, and the Liberals draw the battle line.

The minister and the Deputy Premier must realize that every Ontario family needs real hydro relief—not another Liberal shell game—that can only come from a shift in policy direction from the wrong direction that this government is on.

Will the Deputy Premier stand in her place and announce a real policy change that will bring real relief to Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm a bit surprised that the member opposite isn't actually standing up and saying, "I'm really happy to see the debt retirement charge go," because this will be off the hydro bills two years earlier than planned, saving families \$70 a year.

In addition, we are focusing on the same people that you have brought up in question period, that your party has brought up in question period: those who really are burdened by high electricity bills. We know that the lower the income, the higher the burden of that bill.

As I said earlier, I really genuinely hope, politics aside, that everyone in this Legislature takes the time to make sure their constituents know about the new Ontario Electricity Support Program. It is a significant reduction in hydro bills. It is focused on people who have the lowest and moderate incomes. It is important that all members—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, they love to talk about a cornucopia of programs, none of which would need to exist if they had a proper energy policy.

This is just another classic play from the Liberal governing handbook: Announce a redistribution program so that the minister and the Premier can have some nice photo ops, but when you examine the details, it is nothing more than another shell game.

Because of the sliding scale of the OESP, many families who need relief simply will not get it. But more important is the point that the \$30 stipend from the OESP is nothing compared to the hundreds and hundreds of dollars this government has added to those same people's hydro bills over the years, and the hundreds more that you're going to add, each and every year, over the next decade.

Will the Premier just simply admit that the Ontario Electricity Support Program is more about photo ops and expensive ad campaigns than actually helping low-income electricity consumers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, maybe the member opposite can sniff at \$500-a-year relief for Ontario families, but that's a meaningful difference for Ontarians.

I found it very intriguing, during the last federal election campaign, when the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment touted Canada's progress on reducing greenhouse gases by citing the changes we made in Ontario on shutting down those coal-fired plants.

We're proud of the decisions that we made to reduce greenhouse gases. We're proud of the decisions we made to improve the quality of our air. We're proud of the decisions we made to build a reliable energy system.

We all remember what it was like under their watch. It's not time to go back. We've made investments. We don't need more blackouts. We've got the kind of electricity system—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Municipal electricity utilities currently make payments to the Ontario government in lieu of municipal and school taxes. This money is supposed to help pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. Under current law, when the residual stranded debt is finally retired, these payments are supposed to go back to the municipalities.

But now the government has decided to lay a permanent claim to these payments. Bill 144 changes the law so that this money will never flow to municipalities, even after the residual stranded debt is paid.

Why is the government keeping the money that is supposed to be going back to municipalities and schools?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The payment in lieu of taxes—that is being released, as would any other company, be it municipally and/or Hydro One. A majority of the LDCs are actually owned municipally, and those payments in lieu of taxes continue. Notwithstanding the amount that is being received, the proportionate amount goes to the residual stranded debt and/or stranded debt. Now we also have that billion dollars more going directly to OEFC debt.

Ultimately, we are sourcing greater valuation from this corporation, enabling us to reinvest in infrastructure and into other programs, to provide even greater returns for the people of Ontario and, at the same time, paying down debt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Acting Premier: The residual stranded debt should be nearly paid off by now. But by selling Hydro One, the government is making this debt bigger and forcing businesses to keep paying \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges.

Now the government wants to permanently keep money that, under current law, is supposed to flow to municipalities and schools after the residual stranded debt is paid off.

How many more cash grabs will the government sneak into law to replace the money it's giving up by selling off Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite likes to cite the FAO, but now he doesn't want to cite the FAO, who says that as a result of this transaction, we're able to source additional funding to pay down debt, and it's undetermined and uncertain what the residual stranded debt will be going forward, because it is an uncertain process.

We are providing certainty. We're removing the debt retirement charge from residences by the end of this year. Furthermore, we're reducing it for all businesses and commercial by the end of April 1, 2018. That provides

certainty nine months ahead of schedule, regardless of the degree of stranded debt that will still remain.

We know that that's important for residences; we know that's important for businesses. We know it's even more important for us to reinvest those funds into new infrastructure and new assets. That's exactly what we're doing.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I understand that the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is responsible for providing oversight to Tarion, an administrative authority that manages the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. As part of this oversight, the ministry recently announced a review of the act, with the objective of improving consumer protection for new homeowners.

I'm excited to see this review progressing, because home warranty coverage is a particularly important priority in my riding. Trinity-Spadina is a rapidly developing area, with new homes built regularly. Modernized legislation could potentially improve the coverage Ontarians receive.

1120

The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act review is particularly timely, as it builds on a series of important steps this government has taken to improve warranty protection for new homeowners. Can the minister please speak to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for the question and for being a champion on this issue.

We will continue to work with Tarion to make improvements to the program, but let's talk about the improvements we've made to date under our government. We've developed and expanded a builders' registry that provides consumers with more information. We've doubled the warranty program from \$150,000 to \$300,000 for consumers. We've launched a new builder education program to ensure builders in Ontario meet the high standards we set, and we've removed an industry majority on Tarion's board of directors. There is now a balance on that board.

I am pleased with these steps, but I understand that further improvements can be made. The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is nearly 40 years old and my ministry has committed to an independent review to assess how the legislation can be strengthened.

I'm pleased that former Associate Chief Justice Douglas Cunningham has committed to undertaking the review, and I look forward to commenting more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for his work on this very important issue. I have spoken to the minister on a few occasions after my constituents raised concerns about their new home warranty.

Many of my constituents were pleased with the announcement of the review led by Justice Cunningham. The purchase of a home is the largest investment most homeowners will make in their lifetime. The review will help to ensure the investment is protected. I see great potential in this review, particularly in its commitment to include multijurisdictional comparisons and detailed consultations with new homeowners and the public, consumer advocacy groups, municipal stakeholders and many other impacted parties.

I understand that this important work will take place over an eight-month timeline. I know the minister will have to wait until the completion of the review before making any commitments on his next steps. In the meantime, can the minister speak to what he expects this review to focus on, and how recommendations will help our government work with Tarion to strengthen the protection program?

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you again to the member from Trinity-Spadina. As I mentioned, we've appointed Justice Cunningham to lead the review openly and transparently, with broad consultation and engagement from all stakeholders that are concerned about this issue.

I've specifically asked that the review focus on several key areas, such as how we can strengthen consumer protection in a number of ways, including warranty coverage levels and duration, as well as the dispute resolution process and the degree of government involvement in the policy changes of Tarion.

As well, Speaker, the review will focus on accountability and oversight of Tarion; any information disclosure requirements that would bring Tarion more in line with some of our other Open Government commitments are an objective that we're looking for.

While Tarion no longer has an industry majority on its board, we're also going to review board governance, and we'll also be reviewing the regulation-making authority of the board.

I look forward to seeing Justice Cunningham's report and acting on those recommendations.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. As the minister knows, for too many years now, we've seen too many patients forced to travel to Queen's Park to plead with government for life-saving and life-transforming medication and treatment for rare diseases. In the last year alone—and today—I brought in families whose heart-wrenching stories cry out for the government's attention, many going into debt to pay for the life-saving treatment that government is failing to provide.

Speaker, I've launched a website, treatraredisease.ca, where people can share stories and speak to the need for the health care support we all deserve.

This morning, I announced my private member's motion calling on government to strike an all-party select committee to develop recommendations for the funding of rare disease treatment. Will the minister commit today to support my motion for meaningful long-term solutions for rare disease sufferers here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member opposite for his advocacy on behalf of individuals living in this province with rare diseases. It can be as much as 6% of our population. I think it's actually as high as 8% of the population who suffer from rare diseases.

I also want to acknowledge the courage of those who were invited by the member opposite, who came here today to tell their very difficult stories about how they've struggled with these rare diseases, including the challenge in our health care system of proper diagnosis.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that the public know that Ontario is in fact co-chairing and leading a process nationally across the country. We've established a committee nationally, specifically to develop a strategy for rare diseases in this country. Ontario is leading that effort. We're co-chairing the process. We expect, as a result of that process, to be able to have improvements in this province so we can provide the care these people so rightly deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: This all-party committee would hear from experts, physicians, drug manufacturers and, most importantly, rare disease patients in a meaningful dialogue instead of the press conferences they are forced to hold to get your attention. Minister, I'm sure you agree that patients deserve more than words of understanding from government and a pat on the back when they are at your doorstep and the cameras are on.

This all-party committee will review recommendations the government has already received and hear from experts to make sure patients suffering from rare diseases are treated fairly in the system. It's my hope that an all-party select committee will unlock that process, which has long remained out of reach. Will the minister join me and support my call to strike the select committee into funding and treatment for rare disease in Ontario? Yes or no?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly look forward to the debate on your private member's bill.

It's also important that long before the member opposite had his press conference several weeks ago with patients who were suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, long before that, months before that, we struck a committee in government specifically on EDS, an expert panel where we brought together all the experts across the province. When he brought those patients to Queen's Park, I made a commitment to them that day that I would invite them to participate in that panel and speak to that panel so that the panel would understand their specific circumstances and the challenges they face.

I'm happy to report that two weeks ago, I joined those families and those patients in front of the expert panel on EDS so that panel could hear directly from those individuals.

It's important that we focus on the patients—and we need all the partners. We need our drug companies—drug companies like Alexion, which has perhaps the highest-priced drug in the world and which chooses to sue our federal government instead of working proactively with us so we can deliver those medicines to those who dearly need them.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Friday, we learned that 84 jobs will be cut at hospitals in Belleville, Trenton and Prince Edward county as the Liberals chop \$11.5 million from those hospitals. It means fewer nurses and health care workers to care for patients in operating rooms, the ER, infection control, the women's and children's unit and rehab—the list goes on.

When local residents fall sick, they will feel the impact of these Liberal cuts because every one of those workers does an important job: They save lives.

When will this Liberal government finally decide that patients are the priority and put a full stop, a full moratorium on any more cuts to registered nurses and frontline health care workers in Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the leader of the third party is referring to a process that was undertaken by the hospital corporation, the Quinte Health Care Corp., that involves four different hospitals. It's an effort for them to move forward in a sustainable fashion with regard to their funding allocation. It's true that there are some job losses that will result. That's always a difficult thing, something we try to avoid at every step.

There will be some shifts, as well, where it's deemed that that particular job description can be adequately or sometimes even better fulfilled by another type of individual, and that results in a shift of the job. But there are also 78 new positions that will be created as a result of these changes.

I'm working very closely with the Quinte Health Care Corp., working very closely with the LHIN, working very closely as well with members of our own caucus to make sure we do this properly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Patients know how important nurses and health care workers are. I wish the Premier and the Minister of Health felt the same way, but under the Liberals, more than 625 registered nursing positions have been cut from Ontario hospitals this year alone, and more cuts are happening every week. Let's think of that another way, Speaker. It means that at least two registered nurses have lost their job in Ontario hospitals every single day since January 1 under this Premier's orders.

Why won't the Liberal government take responsibility for the deep cuts to patient care and order a full stop right here and now to any further cuts to nurses and front-line hospital workers?

1130

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the leader of the third party focuses on the job losses. She doesn't talk about net jobs in terms of the many hundreds of new jobs that are created, including for our nurses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the hard work of the member from Northumberland—Quinte West when it comes to Quinte because, particularly with the Trenton hospital but across that whole region, he has been working very, very hard to make sure that the services that those individuals and those communities deserve are retained.

In fact, through that process, we've been working where we created a community consultation process. More than 15 members of the local community that that member represents were consulted in terms of their health care needs and what they want to see in their health care corporation and the local community.

We're also going to be undertaking—and this was at the initiative of the member from Northumberland—a feasibility study to see how we can actually strengthen, in the case of the Trenton hospital, its efforts towards a health community hub.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Education. One of the most important aspects of what we do in government, I think, and one of the issues that I hear about the most in my riding of Etobicoke Centre is education, about providing our young people with access to excellent education. I know that our Minister of Education works very diligently and hard on that every single day.

When the government of Ontario and the Anishinabek Nation signed the first memorandum of understanding in 2009, it was clear that they made a commitment to ongoing collaboration that would support the establishment of the Anishinabek education system.

Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Anishinabek Nation, I understand, Minister, that you have met on a regular basis, to identify and discuss common educational issues.

To further this process, in January 2014 the Anishinabek and Ontario agreed to enter into discussions on a master education framework agreement. Minister, can you please tell this House what the purpose is of entering into discussions on a master education framework agreement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for the question on a very important issue for all of us.

I want to begin by recognizing the long history of First Nations people in Ontario and, in particular, the history of the Anishinabek peoples.

The development of a master education framework agreement serves as an outline—almost an index—to the objectives, scope, principles and processes for the negotiation of a proposed master education agreement. It gives us an opportunity to collaborate on and formalize those partnerships. In fact, the master education agreement, when we get it completed, will formalize the relationship between the Anishinabek Nation and Ontario.

The agreement also confirms that we will work collaboratively with the Anishinabek people so that there's better co-operation between their schools and Ontario schools, which are actually where most of the Anishinabek students attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. Last Thursday, I understand that you visited with the Anishinabek First Nations in Sault Ste. Marie and successfully signed the master education framework agreement, which, I think it is fair to say, is an historic event. To my mind, it is evidence of your commitment and the ongoing commitment of our government and the Anishinabek First Nations to negotiate the terms of a new agreement in order to support First Nations students' education across the province.

I am pleased to know that First Nations students will have better access to education in Ontario and will work toward closing the gap in Ontario. Minister, can you please tell this House what the successful master education framework agreement will mean going forward?

Hon. Liz Sandals: It was indeed a very moving and exciting occasion. There were chiefs from all over Ontario there to sign the master education framework agreement. Everybody who was there agreed that this was truly an historic occasion which gives us an opportunity to collaborate. As I said, if we are going to ensure that our Anishinabek students succeed, we must collaborate.

Some of the students are in First Nations schools; the majority are in Ontario schools. What the master education agreement will lead to, when it's fully completed, is the ability to support students who are transitioning from one to another. It will enable us to share professional development. It will enable us to further expand on the agreements that we have between school boards and the relationship between school boards and First Nations.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Bargaining talks between the province and correctional officers and staff continued over the weekend without results. There is a cost that comes from failing to reach an agreement.

During one weekend this month, correctional officers didn't sign up for voluntary overtime. As a result, the province is said to have paid its managers to be on call all weekend, at a cost of about \$600,000. In May, we learned that the province had spent millions of dollars to prepare for strikes, months before negotiations ever began.

Speaker, how much money has the province spent to date due to the government's failure to secure a deal with corrections staff over a year of negotiations?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'm a bit puzzled by the question because I take it he wants to intervene in a collective bargaining process that is taking place right now. I'm sure he will be the first one to counsel me not to engage in collective bargaining on the floor of the Legislature. We should respect the process that is ongoing. Both sides are working hard. We are very proud that we were able to reach an agreement which was ratified with OPSEU at the unified and at the central table. The corrections table continues to work hard.

In the meantime, we take the health and safety of our inmates and our staff very seriously, and we'll continue to make sure that all our correctional facilities are safe at all times and that services are provided to the inmates through appropriate staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I would encourage the government to continue to bargain in good faith—something that we don't believe is happening.

Unfortunately, years of Liberal mismanagement have led to a crisis in corrections. This has significantly impacted the relationship between correctional staff and the province. Staff have made numerous complaints about dangerous conditions in facilities, and have raised the alarm that our correctional facilities are understaffed. In return, correctional officers have been ignored. Even worse, some of them have been instructed by the government to stay quiet. Ontario's correctional officers and staff feel disrespected by this government.

Minister, when will your ministry show Ontario's correctional, parole and probation officers the respect that they deserve?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the question is a serious question. It is an important question that is being asked, and I want to give a serious response to the member opposite and all members.

We take our responsibility in terms of our correctional staff very, very seriously. We want to make sure that they're properly trained and that they're properly staffed because our correctional workers are on the front line when it comes to providing appropriate services around rehabilitation and reintegration for the offenders who are in our care and custody. That is why we have been working very hard since 2013, in an accelerated fashion, rehiring correctional, probation and parole officers. In fact, we have hired almost 500 new correctional officers in our institutions. We continue to engage in robust hiring as well. In fact there are about 100 correctional officers being trained at the corrections college as we speak.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Last week, a member of the Liberal

caucus, the MPP for Kitchener Centre, publicly admitted that the Liberals' current plan for Kitchener-Waterloo GO trains is inadequate. She knows, just like the people of Kitchener-Waterloo do, that your government promised two-way, all-day GO trains to Kitchener in five years just 18 months ago. In April this year, Premier Wynne backtracked. We won't see the first GO train from Toronto to Kitchener arrive in the morning until 2025 at the earliest. Speaker, that's just not good enough. The people of Kitchener-Waterloo know what's at stake. Last year, your predecessor, Minister Murray, said that there would be GO train service that runs every 15 minutes between Waterloo region and Toronto within five years. That's what the former Minister of Transportation said to the people of Kitchener-Waterloo.

My question though is to today's minister. It's a simple one: When can the people of Kitchener-Waterloo expect more than one-way GO trains between Kitchener and Toronto: five years, 10 years or longer?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, my only regret is that I won't have a chance to have a second friendly question like I just received from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

I want to begin answering by paying tribute to the member from Kitchener Centre in the government caucus and to the member from Cambridge because of their advocacy—not just their advocacy, but their real understanding of what's required when you need to make the tough decisions to fund important, crucial infrastructure.

Perhaps that's the kind of question that that member can ask her leader, who just days ago brought forward a motion and, in debate on that motion, neglected to tell anybody in her own caucus exactly how she, the leader of the NDP, would fund transportation infrastructure. More importantly, the leader of the NDP neglected to tell her own caucus members which one of their projects that they're so desirous of she would cancel if she had the chance.

On this side of the House, we understand the importance of spending \$31.5 billion over the next 10 years to move the province forward, to move Kitchener forward and to build Ontario up.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today the Assyrian youth group, a group of college and university students from across the GTA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Lakeshore on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: It's my pleasure to welcome, from the town of Mimico in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the grade 5 class from John English school, with their teacher, Mr. Stamatopoulos.

DEFERRED VOTES

ENDING COAL FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bill.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Tuesday, November 17, 2015, Mr. Murray moved third reading of Bill 9. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnett, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gates, Wayne
Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie

Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
McDonell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.

Nagy, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Oraziotti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Qaadir, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 86; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is not the process to interfere with a vote. I will not interfere with a vote, but if anyone ever uses unparliamentary language, I would offer them an opportunity to withdraw on their own.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, thank you very much.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: Enough is enough. Mr. Speaker, last week the constituents in my riding got news that 162 positions were being cut from Quinte Health Care. That's 162 job cuts that are affecting Belleville General Hospital, Trenton Memorial Hospital and Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, but most significantly, cuts that will affect the lives of thousands of patients and their families in the region. The 162 job losses at our hospitals include some of the most vital front-line workers, such as registered practical nurses, but extend to those who help the hospital run day to day, such as maintenance workers.

As the Ontario Nurses' Association vice-president Vicki McKenna stated, "reducing ... in emergency departments puts patients at risk," and "similar models have been tried elsewhere" with disastrous effects.

It's obvious that these cuts will have a negative impact on patients. Every day, hundreds rely on the high level of quality care that our hard-working nurses provide to the most vulnerable and those in need. Last year, Quinte Health Care received an approval rating of 99.9% for its quality of care, but with further staff cuts it's hard to imagine how care will ever improve at Trenton Memorial, Belleville General or Prince Edward County Memorial when this government is cutting jobs for people who deal with patients every day.

For the last couple of years, we've seen cut after cut forced onto local health care by this government. Eventually we're going to have to ask: How much more can our community give? How much more can our hospitals give? How much more of Prince Edward County Memorial or Trenton Memorial Hospital can go under the knife before there's no hospital left? The answer to that question is no more cuts.

WESTERN MUSLIM STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member for London South.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the first annual gala of the Western Univer-

sity Muslim Students' Association, or MSA, at the London Muslim Mosque. The event brought together more than 100 young Muslims from the Western MSA, the Fanshawe MSA, the Oakridge MSA from my riding of London West, which is London's largest secondary school MSA, and many other students and community members.

I rise today to applaud the efforts of these young people to raise awareness, promote cross-cultural understanding and challenge negative and dangerous stereotypes. Proceeds from the gala will be used to support the Western MSA Islam Awareness Week, an annual campus initiative held to encourage dialogue between Muslims and people of other faiths. Information booths, seminars and presentations by guest speakers are organized to highlight diversity within the Muslim community and dispel common misconceptions.

With world attention focused on the horrific and brutal violence in Paris, the efforts of the Western MSA take on special significance. In order to stand strong in the face of terrorism, we must stand together across race, ethnicity, language, religion and nationality to acknowledge the attacks in Paris and Beirut for what they are: a perversion of Islam, not a reflection.

We can all take a lesson from the enthusiastic and dedicated young people who participate in Muslim student associations on campuses and in schools across Ontario. Understanding is the best and most effective way to prevent fear. I am proud to congratulate the Western MSA and support them in their efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from London West. I said "London South." There is no London South; it's London West.

Further members' statements?

GALA DE RECONNAISSANCE À EMBRUN

RECOGNITION GALA IN EMBRUN

M. Grant Crack: Samedi soir, j'ai eu l'opportunité d'être présent au tout premier Gala de reconnaissance des gens de cœur.

On Saturday night, I had the privilege to attend the first recognition gala in Embrun, in the great riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It was a wonderful evening where we gathered to celebrate collectively the great work done by our community volunteers, celebrate our local entrepreneurs and also recognize community leaders.

I want to congratulate all those who were nominated, and specifically those who won awards: le prix APHO—la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario—Patrice Dagenais; le leadership communautaire, la Banque Alimentaire Bons Voisins; la nouvelle entreprise de l'année, Boulangerie du village; service excellence, Euphoria Smoothies; and ambassador of the year, Jonathan Pitre.

Speaker, instead of choosing one winner, the review committee decided that all five nominees should win the

Volunteer Community Service Award. Congratulations to Christian Therkelsen, Connie Johnston, Greg Rokosh, Judy McFaul and Marie-Claire Ivanski. We were thrilled to have with us as a guest speaker Jonathan Pitre, who also won the perseverance award. Fifteen-year-old Jonathan suffers from a rare genetic condition, epidermolysis bullosa (EB), and he delivered an inspiring speech perfectly in both official languages.

I want to congratulate all of the winners, and also the mayor, Pierre Leroux, and the council of the township of Russell for organizing such a lovely evening.

KENT AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Last week, three of my constituents earned well-deserved recognition for their accomplishments and service through their induction into the Kent Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Rex Crawford is a farmer who has served his community in a wide variety of capacities, including as a member of Parliament. In Dover, he farmed some of the finest and most productive land in the country. Rex has grown corn, soybeans, oats and wheat, sugar beets and tobacco. Rex is also a conservationist and has served on the boards of both the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority. I am proud to call Rex Crawford my friend, and I congratulate him on his induction.

Also inducted to the hall of fame were Bill and Diane Parks. Bill began as a soil and crop specialist for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. Meanwhile, he and his wife Diane had already begun the cultivation of blueberries. They moved their plantation to its present site near Bothwell in 1979. In 1990, Bill and Diane created the famous Parks Blueberries and Country Store. Today the Parks store employs 10 workers full-time and 25 part-time. Bill was named agriculturalist of the year by the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Together, Bill and Diane were named agricultural innovators of the year, and they have received a lifetime leadership achievement award from the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association.

On behalf of all the constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I'd like to congratulate all the inductees in 2015.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which will be held on December 3, 2015. The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The observance of the day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Here in Ontario, while persons with disabilities are active and engaged in society, there continue to be many challenges they must overcome. There is the pressing issue of affordable housing, with persons with developmental disabilities seeing long wait-lists, which hurts not only these individuals, but also families who are trying to support their loved ones.

Last week the member from Essex raised the lack of enforcement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which for the past 10 years this government has ignored.

Finally, there is the issue of mental health. I am proud to have introduced my bill, which will address many issues in the mental health system and will alleviate much of the stigma that surrounds mental health issues in this province.

It is my hope that on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, this government will finally give these individuals the respect they deserve.

OTTAWA REDBLACKS

LE ROUGE ET NOIR D'OTTAWA

Mr. John Fraser: Christmas came early for Ottawa this year. November 22, 2015, will be forever etched in the hearts of Redblacks fans. A spectacular 93-yard Henry-Burris-to-Greg-Ellingson touchdown in the final minutes of the game secured a victory and ended a 34-year Grey Cup drought for Ottawa.

The sold-out crowd was treated to a great back-and-forth game of football. I was proud to be there with both of my sons to watch the game. For years, Ottawa football—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I can hear the Hamilton fans over there; they're still grumbling.

For years, Ottawa football has brought our community and its people together. Félicitations; congratulations to coach Campbell, his staff, the players, and all those connected with the organization for making it to the Grey Cup in your second year. Thank you to the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group and all their partners who worked so hard to realize the dream of bringing a team to Ottawa.

1310

The Redblacks have been a great boost to Ottawa's community spirit. I know that all of Ottawa is behind our team and there will be a lot of Grey Cup parties this weekend. I look forward to watching the game at one of those parties. One more game. Go Redblacks! Allez les Rouge et Noir!

CHRISTMAS TREE DAY

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to encourage members of this House to observe Ontario's first Christmas Tree Day, which will take place on Saturday, December 5. The Christmas Tree Day Act, a bill supported by all parties of this House, received royal assent in June,

making Christmas Tree Day in Ontario the first Saturday in December each year.

Aside from being part of our annual holiday tradition, Christmas trees make up an important part of our economy in Ontario. The \$12-million industry involves 647 tree farms producing over a million Christmas trees each year. This industry employs thousands of people in the agriculture, transportation and retail sectors.

While a key part of our agricultural sector, the crop plays an important role in the environment also. According to the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, tree farms provide a stable refuge and feeding area for wildlife. Christmas trees also help remove carbon dioxide from the environment, and after the holidays, they can be used as mulch.

I'm asking all members to promote Christmas Tree Day to their constituents because of the important role these trees play in our lives. I would ask that members encourage people to buy a real tree to support our economy and the environment.

In closing, I'd like to thank Mr. Fred Somerville of Somerville Nurseries and Mrs. Shirley Brennan of the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario for the work they do and for the assistance they provided to me so that Christmas Tree Day could become a reality in Ontario.

FIAT CHRYSLER CASTING PLANT

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I rise today in the House to share with members something of a tour of the Fiat Chrysler casting plant in Etobicoke-Lakeshore that I enjoyed a few weeks ago.

This facility was built in 1942 for the war effort. It was purchased by Chrysler in 1954 to make pistons and other engine components. During the 2008 financial downturn, the future of this plant was uncertain, but when Fiat bought it, they announced an investment of over \$27 million to bring in production that would sustain the facility. In 2012, they had just over 200 employees. Today they have over 530.

This is one of the plants in North America that has cutting-edge technology and it's actually employing people in highly skilled positions. That's where the growth and employment is. It's proof that innovation and success in Ontario are possible when we invest in our people.

I'm so proud of this facility. The employees there are multigenerational; some of their grandfathers worked there. For a car plant, unusually, many of the employees actually walk to work. Because they're part of the community, they contribute to community causes. They are an example that "made in Ontario" in the auto sector is world-class.

EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I take this opportunity to rise and share some good news from the great riding of Etobicoke North. There are a number of developments.

First of all, of course, we're very proud to be part of a massive expansion that's going to be taking place at Etobicoke General Hospital. We're not supposed to be talking about the dollar value, but I estimate it's going to be at least \$200-million-plus. We're tripling to quadrupling the floor space, the actual imprint of the hospital. There are a number of new facilities that are coming online: a new cardiorespiratory diagnostic unit, massively expanded emergency room, birthing suites, renal dialysis, maternal newborn care and so on.

I look forward to being there for the opening. We've already attended many, many functions in terms of ribbon cutting and the architectural plans and the groundbreaking, etc., but we look forward to when it actually comes online to help my residents and constituents in Etobicoke North.

Along with that, I'd like to share with you an extraordinary development for Humber College. Again, as I recall, the share for the government of Ontario was something on the order of about \$90 million. It's a massive new and very elegant student centre. You'll be pleased to know, Speaker, that the Finch LRT is going to be basically stopping at that—it's the final end-point terminus, right in the great riding of Etobicoke North. There are actually eight stops that are coming to Etobicoke North.

Whether it's transportation, education or health care, Etobicoke North is on the move.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on Cancer Screening Programs, section 4.01 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member have a short statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table today the committee's report, entitled Cancer Screening Programs (Section 4.01 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Lisa MacLeod, Vice-Chair; Han Dong, John Fraser, Percy Hatfield, Harinder Malhi, Julia Munro, Arthur Potts and Lou Rinaldi.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Cancer Care Ontario for their attendance at the hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerks of the Committee, and staff in legislative research.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption—sent to you via page Ross.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks / Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 27, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 with respect to the disclosure of specified information relating to children and services in respect of children / Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à la divulgation de renseignements précisés concernant les enfants et les services à leur intention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Miss Monique Taylor: The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to provide protection for an employee against reprisal in situations where the employee takes steps in relation to reporting, under section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act, a suspicion that a child is in need of protection.

Part VI of the Public Service of Ontario Act establishes a scheme under which public servants may disclose wrongdoing. The bill amends the act to provide that specified persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children are public servants for the purpose of that part of the act.

The bill also extends the protection against reprisals to circumstances where a public servant has disclosed information in relation to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007.

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PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Noam.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Whereas Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington has long been identified as dangerous and unable to meet growing traffic volumes; and

“Whereas the widening of this highway passed its environmental assessment in 2006; and

“Whereas the portion of this project from Windsor to west of the town of Essex has been completed, but the remainder of the project remains stalled; and

“Whereas there has been a recent announcement of plans to rebuild the roadway, culverts, lighting and signals along the portion of Highway 3 that has not yet been widened;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To revisit plans to rebuild Highway 3 from Essex to Leamington and direct those funds to the timely completion of the already approved widening of this important roadway in Essex county.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Ben.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas our present land leases with Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA); however, they are exempted from the protection of rent controls under the act. Being part 1, section 6, subsection 2, and

“Whereas the landlord has the option to increase the monthly land rental by \$50 above the existing rent, to a new purchaser, when a home is sold.

“Whereas ‘Country Meadows’ is a community of permanent homes located on leased lands whose residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Continued rental increases beyond the guidelines of the RTA, is unsustainable to retired residents on fixed incomes.

“Therefore, we the undersigned residents of ‘Country Meadows’, petition the Legislature to change the RTA to include rent controls for retirement type communities located on leased lands and, to delete the option given to landlords to increase land rental rates upon sale of a home in such communities. The foregoing would enable retirees to remain in their homes and enjoy their hard-earned retirement years.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign the petition and give it to page Hannah to deliver.

CURLING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's curling clubs are experiencing significant spikes in hydro costs due in large part to the so-called 'global adjustment'; and

"Whereas Ontario's curling clubs have already been forced to raise rates and reduce services to their members; and

"Whereas if those costs continue to rise, it could affect their ability to provide curling services to current or future members; and

"Whereas there are over 200 curling facilities in Ontario used by approximately 50,000 curlers; and

"Whereas up to 100 curling clubs are already at risk of closing due to the high cost of hydro; and

"Whereas community building—multi-generations can play together or against each other, curlers come from a wide variety of backgrounds: professionals, business owners, tradespeople, teachers, students, retirees; and

"Whereas great exercise for all ages and ability, an affordable sport with many different levels of competition from little rocks, juniors, adults, seniors and even at the Olympics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately develop new policies to address the inequities of the class allocation system for global adjustment charges that are impacting the existence of curling clubs and other non-profit associations across Ontario."

I agree with this petition and send it down with page Michelle.

POET LAUREATE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas poets laureate have been officially recognized at all levels of Canadian government and in at least 15 countries around the world; and

"Whereas the establishment of our own poet laureate for the province of Ontario would promote literacy and celebrate Ontario culture and heritage, along with raising public awareness of poetry and of the spoken word; and

"Whereas the member from Windsor-Tecumseh has introduced private member's Bill 71 to establish the Office of Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario as a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy, to focus

attention on our amazing poets and to give new focus to the arts community in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the establishment of the Office of Poet Laureate as an officer of the Ontario Legislature and that private member's Bill 71, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Megan Faith to deliver.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and send it down with Aaran.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai le plaisir de présenter une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit un projet de privatisation qui entraînera une hausse des tarifs d'électricité, une baisse de la fiabilité et des centaines de millions de dollars en moins pour nos écoles, nos routes et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que le projet de privatisation sera particulièrement préjudiciable pour les communautés du Nord et des Premières Nations; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit ce projet de privatisation dans le secret, faisant que les Ontariens n'ont pas un mot à dire sur un changement qui affectera sérieusement leur vie; et

« Attendu qu'il n'est pas trop tard pour annuler le projet;

« Compte tenu de cela, nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« Que la province de l'Ontario annule immédiatement son projet de privatisation du réseau de distribution d'électricité de l'Ontario. »

J'appuie cette pétition et affixe ma signature pour l'envoyer à la table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition here:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads and hospitals; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has already wasted \$2 billion on the smart meter program and \$1.1 billion on the gas plant scandal; and

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Officer has confirmed the Liberal government’s plan to sell off Hydro One will result in Ontario’s fiscal situation deteriorating; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cancel the fire sale of Hydro One.”

On behalf of my constituents, I completely agree with this petition and affix my signature on it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

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“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario [government] to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table through page Megan.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension

plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I’ll support this, sign my name and send it with page Michelle.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Ross to deliver.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician

services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition. I will send it down with page Ben.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas wait times are rising to 80+ days for an MRI in southwestern Ontario;

“Whereas experienced and qualified technologists are available to fill positions in this field, but lack of funding to hospitals only allows limited hours of operation;

“Whereas by allowing independent health facilities the licence to have MRI as an added modality, it would drastically cut wait times and create much-needed jobs;

“Whereas as a new open MRI would accommodate more patients with claustrophobia and larger size and keep tax dollars in our community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Decrease MRI wait times and create jobs by increasing the funding for MRI services and implement a plan to allow MRI as a modality in independent health facilities in southwestern Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Prasanna.

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the government’s policy involving third parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

“Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

“Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

“Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

“Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNRF’s publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

“Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Benjamin S.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Finance to lead off the debate.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from York South-Weston.

I am pleased to stand today in the House for the second reading of Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, a bill that would help us implement our economic and fiscal plan, as laid out in our 2015 Ontario budget, a bill that helps build Ontario up, a bill that helps build Ontario businesses up. Helping Ontario businesses succeed and grow helps create rewarding and high-paying jobs.

We’ve already made great strides in supporting Ontario businesses, Mr. Speaker. Ontario’s business tax reductions have positioned our province as one of the most attractive locations in the industrialized nations for new business investment. Ontario is one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment in North America.

The government has done a lot to get to this point. We eliminated the capital tax, which corporations paid whether or not they had a profit. This provided \$2.1

billion of tax relief per year. We've cut corporate income tax rates for small and large businesses alike, providing another \$2.3 billion of tax relief each year. And we eliminated the employer health tax for thousands of small employers in Ontario.

All these measures promote a more competitive business climate and attract new business investment, helping to support the backbone of innovation in our economy. But the marketplace is ever-changing, Mr. Speaker, so we must continue to adapt and evolve the support we offer businesses. That's why this government is proposing Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, a bill that, if passed, would enact five new statutes and amend other statutes. It would further the economic plan set forth in the 2015 budget and demonstrate the government's commitment to create a dynamic and innovative business climate, an environment that enables us to spur greater opportunities.

The bill contains a number of significant steps as we move forward with our plan. The government is proposing to remove, for example, the debt retirement charge cost, substantive amounts that will then be released by April 1, 2018, for all non-residential consumers. That's nine months earlier than previously estimated. It would also reduce businesses' electricity bills. Ending the DRC on a legislated, fixed date would provide certainty to commercial, industrial and other users, to help them plan their investments more effectively.

To further help businesses succeed and grow, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, also proposes to make amendments to the Liquor Control Act to operationalize the sale of beer in grocery stores. It simplifies rules in the Securities Act on the regulation of takeover bids and issuer bids, and it provides one-time relief to eligible Ontario interactive digital media companies.

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The bill will also move forward Ontario's infrastructure plan by proposing amendments to the Trillium Trust Act to designate the following as qualifying assets: the LCBO head office lands, Ontario Power Generation's head office building, the Lakeview lands, and the province's shares in Hydro One and Hydro One Brampton. Also under the proposed amendments, net revenue gains from the sale of these assets would be dedicated to the Trillium Trust.

Other proposed changes in the Budget Measures Act, 2015, include improving and streamlining the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario, amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act to strengthen oversight of raw leaf tobacco, and improving the management of corporate land forfeited to the province of Ontario.

To give further insight into the proposed new statutes and amendments, I call upon my colleague Laura Albanese to provide this House with further details on the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand today in the Ontario Legislative Assembly to provide further details on the new statutes and amendments this government is proposing in the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

Bill 144 proposes a number of changes to help Ontario businesses. First, we're looking at the cost of running a business. As you know, this government is committed to reducing electricity cost pressures on small businesses and industrial consumers.

Previously, the government announced that it is removing the debt retirement charge from residential users' electricity bills on January 1, 2016, saving a typical residential user about \$70 per year. This new bill, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to remove the debt retirement charge for commercial, industrial and other non-residential electricity users nine months earlier than previously estimated, on April 1, 2018. This would provide more certainty to commercial, industrial and other users, and help them plan their investment decisions more effectively. This would save a large industrial company using 3,000 megawatts per month \$21,000 per month, and a small business using 20,000 kilowatts per month, \$140 a month.

Second, we are proposing a number of amendments for business tax credits. For instance, the government is proposing changes to the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit. The 2015 Ontario budget announced a number of changes to this tax credit.

Since its introduction in the 1998 budget, interactive digital media products have become mainstream, and tax support has grown at an unsustainable rate. To better meet the needs of this growing industry, the 2015 budget proposed to focus the credit on entertainment products and educational products for children under the age of 12.

To enable regulatory amendments, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to remove a requirement that all, or substantially all, of a product must be developed in Ontario by a qualifying corporation.

On November 2, 2015, the Ministry of Finance released draft regulations for public comment that would replace the requirement, as well as make other amendments to the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit that were announced in the budget.

Third, we are looking at the business of horse racing in this province. In the 2015 budget, our government committed to enabling the long-term success of Ontario's horse racing industry. We recognize that this industry is vital to rural communities across Ontario, and it is an important part of Ontario's rich heritage. It supports rural jobs and economic development in the agricultural sector, particularly as it relates to the horse breeding sector.

In June 2012, the government established a panel to determine how to best modernize the industry. After extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public, the panel's final report, released in October 2013, included a number of key recommendations. Based in part on these recommendations, the government created the Horse Racing Partnership Plan and raised the investment in this plan to \$500 million over five years. This plan will support a world-class horse racing industry in the province. This plan reflects the willingness of many in

the industry to build a new partnership with government and work together to ensure long-term success.

As part of the HRPP, the Horse Racing Partnership Plan, the government directed the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., OLG, to integrate horse racing into its gaming strategy as permitted under existing statutory authorities. In the 2015 budget, the government committed to strategically realigning provincial horse racing regulations, adjudication and funding within the government and its agencies. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to improve and streamline the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario.

Specifically, if passed, the amendments would authorize the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to support live horse racing in Ontario, excluding operation of a parimutuel system of betting. The amendments also authorize the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to undertake the regulation of horse racing in the province, with the licensing adjudicative functions to transfer to MAG's Licence Appeal Tribunal.

OLG are experts in promoting gaming. By integrating horse racing into OLG, the industry will benefit from centralized marketing and expertise that would expose more Ontarians to this live sport.

New provisions would also authorize the Minister of Finance to establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting live horse racing in Ontario. A transitional provision would authorize the minister to designate such a program as the successor to the Horse Racing Partnership Funding Program. This is part of our framework to support the long-term success of the horse racing industry in Ontario.

Fourth, we are strengthening the securities sector through amended legislation.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Toronto is the financial capital of Canada and a leading global financial centre, recently moving up to eighth place in Z/Yen Group's Global Financial Centres Index, and is now ranked second in North America, behind only New York. Toronto is home to many leading banks, securities dealers, insurers, pension funds and financial services firms. The financial services sector, overall, accounts for almost 10% of Ontario's GDP and employs around 380,000 people. Ontario's financial services sector remains the province's second-largest sector after manufacturing, based on output. In 2014, the sector created jobs almost twice as fast as the overall Ontario economy. According to the Conference Board of Canada, 43% of Canada's financial services headquarters employees are based in Toronto. That's triple the next largest, which is Montreal, at only 12.4%.

The securities sector and its regulation are very important to Ontario's economy. Over half of the Canadian securities industry GDP and employment, and 80% of market activity in Canada, by some measures, take place in Ontario. That is why Ontario is taking a leadership role in the establishment of the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System, or CCMR.

Further to a 2015 budget announcement, proposed amendments to securities legislation would largely repeal part 20 of the Securities Act. These amendments are intended to more closely harmonize the provisions in the Securities Act with those of all other provinces and territories and with the proposed approach under the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System.

If this change is enacted, the OSC would make proposed National Instrument 62-104, takeover bids and issuer bids, a rule in Ontario, and most substantive regulatory requirements would be included in the rule. That is consistent with the current approach in all other provinces and territories and the planned approach under the co-operative system. These changes would facilitate transition to the co-operative system, and participating in the system would make capital markets in Canada safer, more efficient and more competitive.

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The proposed amendments to section 142 of the Securities Act would further extend certain exemptions under Ontario Securities Commission rules regulating derivatives markets as they apply to the crown and the Ontario Financing Authority.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, there are other areas that we are focusing on to help grow the economy, and the Budget Measures Act, 2015, supports those areas as well.

We continue to make investments in what matters most to Ontarians: investments in infrastructures like roads, bridges and transit. We know that modern infrastructure is the basis of a well-functioning economy and a prosperous society. It supports Ontario's industries, creates jobs and provides long-term benefits to Ontarians and the economy. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada estimated that the province's infrastructure investments from 2006 to 2014 would add more than \$1,000 to the average annual income of Ontarians by 2014. The Conference Board also said that these investments would lower the unemployment rate by almost 1% relative to where it would otherwise have been.

The opposite side of the coin is this: If governments fail to invest in infrastructure, economic and productivity growth slows and quality of life suffers. That is why Ontario is investing more than \$130 billion over 10 years in public infrastructure projects. This represents the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history. Total investments are expected to support more than 110,000 jobs per year, on average, in construction and related industries, including 20,000 jobs from investments made as part of Moving Ontario Forward.

Excuse my voice, Mr. Speaker; I'm getting over a cold.

Our Moving Ontario Forward plan makes \$31.5 billion available over 10 years for public transit, transportation and other priority infrastructure projects across Ontario. About \$16 billion will be invested in transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and about \$15 billion will be invested in transportation and other priority infrastructure projects across the province outside the GTHA.

To support these investments, we are unlocking the value of provincial assets to help fund these necessary infrastructure investments. As you know, the 2014 Ontario budget established the Trillium Trust, an account dedicated to fund infrastructure investments from asset sales to ensure transparency. As part of the Budget Measures Act, 2015, we are proposing amendments to the Trillium Trust Act to increase that transparency. The changes would confirm certain assets included in the government's asset optimization strategy as qualifying assets under the act, for which net revenue gains from a sale would be dedicated to the Trillium Trust. These assets include the province's shares in Hydro One and in Hydro One Brampton, as well as the LCBO head office lands, the OPG head office building and the Lakeview lands. The net revenue gains from these assets, in turn, would be used to fund infrastructure projects that will create jobs and strengthen the economy.

To conclude, the 2015 Ontario budget laid out our government's vision to make the necessary investments in modern public infrastructure, to create an innovative and dynamic business environment, to invest in people's skills and talents, and to build a strong and secure retirement income system. The Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes changes to further this government's four-part economic plan to build up our province. The act supports Ontario's businesses, helping them to compete in an increasingly competitive global economic environment. It supports investments in key public infrastructure projects that will attract investment, support industry, create jobs and allow people and goods to move more freely throughout Ontario. In short, it will enable us to continue to build Ontario up. That is why I ask the members of this Legislature to support the budget measures act of 2015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Is this the hour speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I look forward to the opportunity very shortly to give a one-hour dissertation on this.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It will be fascinating, scintillating. Quite frankly, this is nothing more than an attempt to double down on the misguided 2015 budget. This is a politically motivated, very cynical, last-minute finance bill that we had no previous knowledge of.

I have to tell you, Speaker, when you have a budget briefing and they hand you a binder, a 200-page binder, and in the very next breath they say, "Now, do you have any questions about it?" what else can you ask other than, "Why did you pick a black binder?" I mean, I hadn't even opened it yet and they're asking for our input on it.

Over the weekend, I did actually have a chance to read it, so I do look forward to offering my comments at length. As I said, very shortly I will speak for an hour on this. I'm looking forward to debating this. Sadly, we have

a majority government in Ontario and no doubt they'll pass their bill, but I do look forward to getting in committee and bringing—because I also know they'll invoke closure. They've invoked closure on just about every other bill that we've debated. Sadly, everybody in the Legislature won't have a chance to speak to this. But when we do get to committee, we will have several amendments that we will be bringing to committee, especially looking forward to removing from this—some would call it an omnibus bill—the section on hydro and the section on the Trillium Trust.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I was quite surprised that debate was—well, just the opening statements from the government on budget measures, Bill 144, were limited to 16 minutes: five minutes from the finance minister and the remainder of the time from his associate minister. That's not a lot of time to hear from the government as to what the content of the bill is and its ramifications.

We know, in our area, exactly how people feel about this government's initiatives when it comes to stimulating our economy and supporting good public policy. It has been lackluster at best. In fact, it has been disastrous, and it has harmed a lot of people.

Some of the things I picked up from the associate minister: Infrastructure investments that were made over the last period of time that she indicated are said to have reduced the unemployment rate 1% lower than what they would have had if they had spent money on infrastructure. It's hilarious that that's the claim they make, that unemployment could have been a lot worse had we not spent any money on infrastructure. "You're lucky we even spent a dime," is what they're saying. Now we're going to burn the furniture to heat the house with the sale of Ontario Hydro.

I recall in this House—I was elected in 2011. I recall then the finance minister of the day. His name was Dwight Duncan. He was from my area, from Windsor-Tecumseh. He talked about the need to bring in the HST. Remember that, the harmonization of the GST and the PST? He claimed that it was going to create 600,000 jobs in this province. Anybody remember that, the 600,000 jobs? We have seen a massive exodus over the last 10 years, with 300,000 jobs in manufacturing alone. To claim that they're going to support horse racing after they devastated horse racing in Ontario is another laughable prospect coming out of this government. I look forward to the debate, and I hope we hear a lot more from the government.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm speaking in favour of this bill, particularly for one area: Contraband tobacco is a significant component of Ontario's underground economy. It undermines provincial health objectives under the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, it results in less tobacco tax revenue for critical public services, and it

compromises public safety through links with organized crime. As an educator, the changes we are making in this area are very important to me. The changes that we are making in regard to contraband tobacco should help to reduce or even stop the flow of contraband tobacco to the teenagers in the schoolyards, who are currently purchasing such products.

Other proposed changes in the Budget Measures Act, 2015, include improving and streamlining the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario; enhancing benefits for injured workers—I think this has been a long time coming, and it will be a great asset for injured workers—also, improving the management of corporate land forfeited to the province. This is an area that needs to be corrected, and I think we're going to make that much better for all involved.

I urge everyone to pay attention to this bill. Yes, it's great that some people decided to read it now, but you should know that I think if you went to my constituency and these things were explained to them—they very clearly think that we are doing important work in this area.

I urge you to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I think one of the NDP members of the House stated that it's very interesting that they have an hour leadoff for this, yet they've only chosen to take 16 minutes—something as significant as the budget and the impact the Hydro sale and all of their measures in the budget are going to have, and yet they don't even use their full hour. It makes you wonder what they're trying to slide through here.

Both the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act should be pulled out of this bill and debated separately. These are very significant, substantive measures, and we need to understand that and be able to have the opportunity to debate and hold them to account.

In regard to the Electricity Act, the Auditor General confirmed in 2011 that the government had collected enough money from the debt retirement charge to remove that charge from Ontario's hydro bills, yet this Liberal government has chosen not to remove that until 2018. So a government that has had all this time, 12 years, to do that are telling us it's paid off—but I'm not certain that the people of Ontario truly trust that they have. Otherwise, why would they not take it off right away?

The other thing I'm concerned about is where they actually have the ability to utilize this money. They're suggesting that the money could go into the Trillium Trust, but there's a loophole that allows only a portion of the proceeds to actually go into the Trillium Trust. That allows the government to use it wherever they want, to be able to make themselves look good—particularly, I trust, in 2018, as we get close to budget time. Mr. Speaker, it's inappropriate.

The money from the sale of Hydro One originally was in legislation that said it had to go to paying off that debt. They've had their 12 years. They've continually added to those debts across our province. And yet, here's a chance, when they actually are doing a fire sale, nonetheless, to take that and pay it all down, as opposed to putting it into things that they will use for their own self-serving purposes.

So I'm very, very concerned, as I believe the people of Ontario would be concerned, with this government and how they've managed debt till now; that they've actually not taken the opportunity to pay down that debt, which would allow us to do a lot of different things across our province, and particularly not spend so much on interest payments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for York South-Weston has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the members for their comments.

I look forward to hearing the member from Nipissing's comments on the bill. He did indicate that he will speak at length, so I look forward to that.

Thank you to the member from Essex. I just wanted to point out that it wasn't my opinion; it was the Conference Board of Canada that said these investments would lower the employment rate by almost one percentage point relative to where it would otherwise have been. It wasn't my opinion; it is that of the Conference Board of Canada.

He also spoke about the horse racing industry. Yes, the plan reflects the willingness of many in the industry and the government to work together in a new partnership so that we can ensure long-term success for this important industry in our province.

I also want to thank the member from Barrie for her comments on what is at heart to her in this bill, and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I wanted to also correct the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who speaks of a fire sale of Hydro One. It is not a fire sale. This is being done in phases in a very balanced and prudent way, I would say, so that we have a chance to see what the reaction of the market is. The first tranche of 15% has been sold and the government still owns 84% of Hydro One. It is not a fire sale; it is a staged process. I just wanted him to take note of that.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up, but I want to encourage all members to support this bill because it's the way that we support our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon. I am pleased to be able to speak for the next hour on this.

As I said earlier, this quite frankly is nothing more than an attempt by this government to double down on this very misguided 2015 budget. This is a politically motivated omnibus bill, cynically aimed at wedging opposition people. Speaker, I won't get into that today; I'm going to get into the meat of this because we can see this for what it is.

We will be seeking amendments at committee. Again, as I mentioned in my two-minute hit earlier, we know that they're going to invoke closure. As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned a few minutes ago, they had a full hour to debate this—it was actually our NDP member who mentioned that as well, a full hour to debate this. They used 16 minutes. That's very telling.

This tells me this is going to zip through. They are not going to let everybody in the Legislature speak to this. They are going to invoke closure, like they have for all of these other bills. They talk about openness and transparency, but it's only talk. We've seen nothing but talk on that in the Legislature. Every time there's an opportunity to put actions behind those hollow words, we don't see the actions; we see more of these types of things where they cut off debate and don't let members speak to the bill.

We are going to ask that certain schedules be removed and introduced as separate pieces. I'm going to talk about those now. The Trillium Trust is one of the first ones, and also the Electricity Act.

The Liberals here are attempting to make—I'll call them sleight-of-hand changes to the Trillium Trust Act and the Electricity Act, and they're going to hide these amongst these 23 other schedules in the bill, hoping that we're all not going to notice. Some of the other 21 schedules—some of them—are housekeeping issues. Some may be long overdue. They've had 12 years to bring these issues to the floor. They haven't. They put them all in a big pot and stuck in very important Trillium Trust and very important Electricity Act changes to bail themselves out of the trouble that they're in.

The changes to the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act in particular need to be pulled out of this bill and brought forward separately. They are so substantive, far too substantive to be included in this omnibus bill with the other changes. They're ramming this bill through the House because it's obvious they forgot to include a majority of these changes when they did the 2015 budget, or they're trying to put a blanket over the bad news that's coming on Thursday, the fall economic statement which, I continue to announce in this Legislature, will be 11 days late—from their own transparency act that they are breaking as well.

1410

Let's talk about the Electricity Act, Speaker. The Auditor General said, back in 2011, that the government had collected enough money from the debt retirement charge to remove the charge from Ontario Hydro's bills. Let me just repeat that. I was brand new. I came in in October 2011, and the Auditor General brought in a report a month later. I was energy critic at the time, and I sat in the media room for the first time and listened to the Auditor General. It was the first time I had seen an AG's report. The auditor—"he" at the time—said to the Liberal government, "You have already collected enough money. So where did the money go?" I remember he asked the finance minister, Dwight Duncan at the time, "You have three months to bring me a report to show me where the

money went, because you've collected"—at the time it was about \$8.7 billion, and the debt was \$7.8 billion. So he asked, "Where did the extra billion go?" Minister Duncan left; he resigned from the Legislature. So we never did get that report.

In addition to confirming that there had been enough money collected in the debt retirement charge, we had some other revelations. The government is confirming today that the debt charge won't be removed until 2018. This is fully seven more years that they have been charging about a billion dollars a year, incidentally. It's somewhere between the high \$900 millions and just over \$1 billion a year; it fluctuates every year. What did they do with that additional \$7 billion? The Auditor General is asking, "What did you do with that extra billion?" Seven more years have now gone by, and we're actually at \$8 billion. What did you do with that money? We know it has been artificially keeping their skyrocketing deficit down in the \$8-billion, \$9-billion, \$10-billion range with this extra \$8 billion.

When you combine the two debt terms, the government is forcing us, basically, to trust that they have paid off the debt with the revenue from the debt retirement charge. That's what they're saying: "In 2018—trust us—it's all going to be paid." But I have to ask you again, Speaker: Considering what the auditor told us, that the debt was paid in 2011 and they're still charging the debt retirement charge every year—\$1 billion or so a year—what the heck did these guys do with all of our money?

I'm going to read—I know the member will be thrilled at this—from my January 23, 2014, Fedeli Focus on Finance, when we disclosed something that we found quite inadvertently. If you look at what the Ministry of Finance had said on August 18, 2011—this was about two months before the 2011 election—they told the public, in print, "Amount of debt to be paid off, \$7.8 billion." That's what they told us the debt retirement charge was.

Only nine months later, after the election, they announced—they came clean and said, the Ontario Ministry of Finance, May 15, 2012: "Amount of debt to be paid off, \$11.9 billion." Somehow the debt, which was a fixed debt, grew to \$11.9 billion. So, the government—we announced this in the Legislature—secretly borrowed \$4 billion against the Hydro debt, and did not tell anybody in the Legislature about it. In fact, Speaker, if you look at the annual report of the OEFC for 2004, it shows the debt at \$7.8 billion. In 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011—each and every one of those annual reports—you can go online and look up what they had the debt in 2004 listed at, and it was \$7.8 billion. The next year, it had gone down and gone down. But every single annual report, they show that the 2004 debt was at \$7.8 billion.

In the 2013 annual report, they restated that amount, for the first time publicly: It was \$11.9 billion. So they had secretly borrowed \$4 billion and never told us about it; never told us the next year, and the next year. In fact—I have to be careful with the words I want to use here, Speaker—they said one thing when the complete

opposite of that was fact. They told us the debt was \$7.8 billion. The OEFC printed this, that our debt was \$7.8 billion. Every year, they printed that, and then, after the election, lo and behold, they corrected it and put it at \$11.9 billion.

That was bad enough, that they had been fooling us for all those years, but the worst thing is that they did something—they borrowed \$4 billion and didn't tell us—with that money. We still, to this minute, don't know what they did with our money. But that's why the debt retirement charge stayed on all these years. They had those extra billions to pay back that they didn't tell the taxpayers.

When you ask, "Where did all this money go if it wasn't paying off \$7.8 billion in the residual stranded debt?", the auditor gave us a major clue in his 2011 report: "External legal advisers we engaged to assist us ... confirmed our view that section 85 of the Electricity Act, 1998 (Act), which is titled 'The Residual Stranded Debt and the Debt Retirement Charge,' allows the DRC to be used for any purpose that is in accordance with the" government's "objectives and purposes, and not just the retirement of the residual stranded debt." The source is the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario 2011 Annual Report, page 12.

So now we know: They found a loophole in the debt retirement charge bill, and instead of charging the people on their hydro bills for the debt retirement charge and lowering the actual charge, they have been using all that money to help artificially lower their deficits. That's what these guys have been up to.

In addition, the government has made changes to the Electricity Act that take money guaranteed to municipalities and allow it to go towards balancing their budget. The government is also allowing the taxes from subsidiaries of Hydro One to go to whatever project the government wants and not paying down the \$26 billion in hydro debt—so, again Speaker, here we are—which will turn out to be a case of burning the furniture to heat the home.

We talk about that in this Legislature all the time. Let me explain a little bit about that. You have this government having a fire sale of Hydro One. They're taking that money—they call it \$9 billion; the Financial Accountability Officer says that the actual cash at the end of the day, after all expenses and the tax which is non-cash are taken out, could be as low as \$1.4 billion. But let's just go with the Liberals' number in Liberal math to begin with. It's \$9 billion.

So, you owe \$26 billion in your hydro—you still owe that. They're going to ostensibly sell hydro for \$9 billion, put \$4 billion against their deficit and \$5 billion will be used to lower the debt. Speaker, we still owe \$21 billion after that. We're still going to have interest payments on that \$21 billion, but now, we don't have, first of all, the principal to apply against there, but we also don't have the revenue coming in, every day, every week, every month, every year, from when we owned Hydro One. So, now you've got this debt—the only way they're going to be able to pay for it is to raise your hydro bills.

We know that this year, 2015, between the hydro increase on May 1, the hydro increase on November 1 and the hydro increase that will come January 1—that's a 33% increase to your hydro bill in eight months. In eight little, short months, it's up 33%. It's going to go even higher now when you don't have the revenue from Hydro coming in. The Financial Accountability Officer told us, plain and simple. If you want to do this—and he's not agreeing that you do it—then you go borrow rather than sell. I would just advocate, lower your expenses and cut your spending, because they've obviously—I'll talk about it in a little while, where this money has been wasted. So cut the waste. Cut that spending and use that method, but if you're not going to do that, then go borrow the money, according to the FAO, because it's far cheaper than when you sell this asset. You're going to have a one-time payment and no revenue forever. You are putting Ontario in a much further precarious position than we've already seen this government put us in.

1420

Think about when they took office. Our debt in Ontario was \$139 billion. It took 20-some Premiers 137 years to get that debt up to \$139 billion, and the Liberals have been able to double it in 10 years and more than double it now in the 12 years they've been in power. We're very concerned that the changes and the sale of hydro, combined with the debt, will only grow, meaning that rates will have to go up to offset the ever-growing debt. I'll chat a bit more about that later, but I want to talk about the Trillium Trust because it's integrated in this whole nonsense about this fire sale.

The government claims that they're dedicating the revenue from the sale of Hydro One and other properties to the Trillium Trust, but yet again, this act contains a loophole allowing the minister to put only—and I'll use the word—"a portion" of proceeds to the Trillium Trust. We've talked about that before. Our party brought amendments at the last budget. We brought amendments when this government wanted to be able to sell an asset, and the operative words are "may" and "portion." They "may" use a "portion" of the asset sale to put into the Trillium Trust; that doesn't say they must put it all. So we brought amendments into committee that asked to change the word "may" to "must": You must put the money in the Trillium Trust. Liberals voted it down. They didn't like that "must." They like "may" because that gives them the flexibility and the wiggle room.

Then, instead of "portion," we had a motion that you had to change it all. Well, the Liberals didn't like that either because they had no intention of putting that money where it's intended to go. So they voted that down because they wanted, as I'll call it, the "wiggle room" again. They may call it "flexibility."

We brought a very simple motion that said, "Let's let the Auditor General, within 90 days of when you sell a significant asset"—within 90 days, the Auditor General will report to this Legislature some very simple facts: What did you sell, how much did you get for it and what did you do with the money? That's pretty simple. Again,

the Liberal government voted it down. They do not want us to hear what they did with the money. They do not want that.

What we've been saying all along is that the money they get from the sale of an asset will never, ever go to what they're saying it's going to, period. They're going to take the revenue from the sale of Hydro One and put it towards balancing their budget, towards their deficit. There's no hesitation for us to stand in this Legislature and say that. I'm going to prove this yet again. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has stood in this Legislature and proved it day after day, week after week.

I will use this budget opportunity to yet again bring the facts in front, and I'll use the Liberals' own budget, page 45. I'll talk to you, Speaker, about where this wiggle room is and the proof in the pudding that they have absolutely no intention of ever using a nickel of this sale of Hydro One towards what they say is transit and infrastructure. That is absolute nonsense. Not a nickel will ever go there, and I will now take the next bit of time and prove that to you.

It has never been about infrastructure. This whole charade has never once—it's all about scrambling, like they did with the debt retirement charge money, the \$1 billion that the auditor showed us, the \$7 billion that we found. It has never been all about this infrastructure. It's all about paying for past scandals and the crippling debt, and we'll prove that to you here in a moment as well.

When you look at something that we saw today or that we read over the weekend—it's brand new, Speaker. It's called section 7, page 3 of schedule 22 of the budget document that we were handed last week. There's a sentence here that says, as part of the authorized expenditures, "To reimburse the crown for expenditures incurred by the crown, directly or indirectly, for a purpose prescribed in paragraph 1." There's a little box where it gives you a little highlight and explains things to you. "Proposed section 7 of the act would specify that an amount not exceeding the balance of the Trillium Trust may—"may," again—"be used to fund, or to reimburse the crown...." That's the key. That's brand new. We now have even further proof that this was never intended for infrastructure. The infrastructure budget that they proposed was already fully funded. I'll get to that in a moment.

This is part of the shell game that will ostensibly put money into transit and infrastructure but take out the money that was already there.

So this is "to reimburse the crown, for construction or acquisition of infrastructure"—and then they say infrastructure is defined in another section.

So here we are, page 3, section 7 of schedule 22—absolute proof. This is what this whole charade of this 200-page document that they handed—again, there are some other important changes they've made and things they could have done over the last 12 years but never got around to doing. They've buried in there one sentence that is sneakily put in here—in 200 pages, several paragraphs, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of

documents, and they've got one sentence that this is all about. It's all to put that one sentence in there and, quite frankly, get away with it. But we read the sentence. It is to reimburse the crown for infrastructure. So now we know. It's laid bare.

I'll temper myself, Speaker.

Now we know that the Liberals are trying to get this through the Legislature, playing this shell game with the people's crown jewel.

Rates are going to go up. We're not going to have any additional improvement to infrastructure to show for it.

I want to go back to something the Financial Accountability Officer said, that our leader, Patrick Brown, has talked about in this Legislature over and over. I refer to page 45 of the budget. I took a section of page 45 of the budget out, and in the recent issue of Fedeli Focus on Finance—it was all about the facts about the sale of Hydro One. You can go on fedeli.com, which is my legislative site—because this is not a political document.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This is a fact-fed document. You can download this.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Facts by Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is facts by Fedeli. We could change it. Thank you.

Let's just go and see what we're talking about, Speaker. Again, the 2015 budget, on page 45, quotes what they had presented in the 2014 budget, so I'm going to talk about that for a second. "Projected asset optimization target"—that's their spin for the selling of the assets. In 2014-15, it's \$1.1 billion. In 2015-16, it's a billion dollars. The next year, it's a half billion dollars. And in the last year, it's a half billion dollars. So they plan on \$3.1 billion of asset sales, which included \$1.1 billion of the General Motors shares. Excluding those shares, there's \$2 billion more over the next three years they were going to add into the Trillium Trust for infrastructure. We know that. That's a fact. It's printed in the 2014 budget, and it's repeated in the 2015 budget. All of that was to fund \$130 billion worth of infrastructure. That was announced in 2014.

Again, as our leader, Patrick Brown, has stated and we've all stated in this Legislature many times, the \$130 billion of infrastructure was set in 2014 and did not need or include the sale of Hydro One to make it happen. Now, they are introducing the sale of Hydro One and pretending that it's for the infrastructure. But they didn't need the money. They showed us that they did not need that money. They never listed that money. So, what is the money really for? Well, we go back to this binder where they are now allowed, when this bill passes, to reimburse the crown for construction or acquisition of infrastructure.

1430

Now we know. The jig's up, Speaker. We now know that the sale of Hydro One is to pay back the crown for the money they are spending on infrastructure. It was never, ever, to be new money. They have been telling us one thing, when what we have been saying all along is

absolutely true. We have laid that bare. In fact, back in April 2015, the Ottawa Citizen figured it out right away:

"A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset ... just to keep doing what we have been doing for years.

"The real answer, I suspect, is that putting some billions of new money into the province's transit trust will enable the government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay for other spending."

The Ottawa Citizen laid this bare back in April. We have been standing in this Legislature day after day, week after week, month after month, saying the same thing, proving that in their own budget—page 45—they showed us that the sale of the GM shares for \$1.1 billion was going into the transit trust, but that only left \$2 billion over the next three years to raise.

This has all been an awful, awful shell game, Speaker, and I think that when the Financial Accountability Officer laid this nonsense in front of us, as well, he called it for what it really is: They're broke; they've overspent—I'll talk about some of the spending in the next few pages. They got caught. They can't balance their own budget. In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer told us—after his independent report on the Hydro sale, a week later, he came out with another independent report on the state of our finances and said, "No, no. They're not going to balance the budget in 2017-18; it will be off by \$3.5 billion."

What they have done so far is that they've quietly borrowed against the energy sector \$4 billion and didn't tell us about it. I'm pretty sure that's already frittered away, so they are digging deeper in the couch now for bigger nickels and dimes; maybe we're up to quarters and loonies now. They are digging in the couch for money. They are going to find it in the pension tax. They're certainly going to find it in the upcoming carbon tax. But excluding those, we now know that the sale of Hydro One—we've laid it bare—is not for transit or infrastructure; it is to bail them out from their deficit.

We then move on to other areas of this presentation. We'll talk about alcohol reform. We support greater market access and the liberalization of beer sales in Ontario, plain and simple. We always have. That being said, the government's idea of freeing up beer sales is writing more and more regulations and rules: limits on where to sell, how to sell, how much you can sell. All they are doing is bundling this up in a big hunk of red tape with a bow on the top of it.

The Premier called it—when she was distracting us from the sale of Hydro One with that announcement—the biggest innovation in alcohol since the Prohibition. I'm thinking, "Selling a six-pack in the corner store—this is your big deal?" Speaker, if you live in northern Ontario and rural Ontario, there are 218 places that already sell beer and wine outside of a Beer Store or a liquor store. Maybe in the GTA, you're not aware of that. But I can tell you that if I want to drive to Nipissing township and go into Young's general store—you can get your fishing licence there, you can gas up, get your boat oil and gas,

and they also have a hand-painted sign outside that says, "Beer and wine for sale." You can go to Young's general store in Nipissing township and buy beer and wine today. This is not a big revelation. This is not the six-pack at the corner store that's the greatest thing since Prohibition. The Premier said that; she said it more than once.

North Bay, where I live, is 45 minutes from the Quebec border. We have a big company, Tembec, that's just across the border—where there's cheaper energy, by the way, Speaker. The 1,000 employees there enjoy that opportunity. But if you drive to Tembec from North Bay and you stop at the little corner store, the only store on the way there, in Eldee, Ontario, you can pick up a fishing licence, you can buy gas—it's the only gas station on the way there—and again, there's a little hand-painted sign: "Beer and wine for sale." You can whip in there and stock up on the way to the cottage, if that's what you want to do.

This is no big revelation. There are 218 places like that. A lot of them are in northern and rural Ontario. Maybe it's a big deal in Toronto, but I'll tell you, Speaker, it's been going on every single day that I can remember.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can still get an Ontario Northland ticket there for the train.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, no. I'm afraid the train has been cancelled, but that's part of the earlier scandals that we'll get into shortly here.

Ontario brewers want a fair opportunity to sell their product. We all understand that. But the Wynne Liberals here, their decision to limit the annual supermarket beer sales to the equivalent of less than 300 six-packs a day isn't going to have a significant impact on job creation in the province. Again, a lot of this is big smoke and mirrors so that we'll be talking about this rather than the fire sale of Ontario Hydro.

Only this government would penalize a company for being too successful. We seem to do that in Ontario a lot. Rather than foster growth and encourage business, these people want to place arbitrary caps on sales for providing a successful service to Ontario. "My God, you're doing well. We'd better stop you. We better figure out how to tax you or figure out how to stop it."

Contraband tobacco is another issue. Every single fall, and again in the spring budget, the Minister of Finance gloats about how he's going to crack down on contraband tobacco in Ontario, but never does a thing. I have been here for four years listening to it. As mayor of the city of North Bay for two terms before that, I listened to it. There are 12 years of listening to all talk and no action whatsoever.

This bill, which is in that black binder, increases the reporting mechanisms for raw-leaf producers, but it takes no reasonable action to crack down on illegal sales. Our MPP Todd Smith's bill, the Smoke-Free Schools Act, takes that action by suspending a driver's licence if they are caught transporting tobacco, and creates education programs for kids. If the minister really wanted to do something, was serious about contraband tobacco, he'd

put that bill within this omnibus legislation, because Todd Smith's bill is a bill that everybody in this Legislature should get behind.

Let's take a second, Speaker, and talk about the motivation behind this bill, Bill 144. First of all, as this Legislature knows full well, the Deputy Premier told us loudly and clearly on W5 only a couple of weeks ago, "We're out of money"—shocking. I watched that W5. I almost fell over when I heard her say that. Of course, we've been saying that since the day we got here, but finally the light went on, and according to our Deputy Premier—I haven't heard the finance minister come up with that yet, but the Deputy Premier said we're out of money. We're going to talk about why we're out of money.

As we look across the street here to the south, there's the MaRS building. The people within MaRS do exceptional work. It's an important component of economic development and research in Ontario. But the building that they're in has nothing to do with the good work that they do. The building that they're in was owned by a United States-owned real estate firm that was struggling and about to be in serious trouble.

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This government, again, without any knowledge of the Legislature—this only came out during the last election when we were handed a brown envelope that gave us the details and the facts came out. We only seem to get the facts from the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the OPP, or when the envelopes come under the door. That's the only time in this Legislature that I've seen that we've actually got facts. So the brown envelope comes under the door, and it told us that a US realtor was being paid approximately \$410 million to be bailed out. When people say, "Vic, what would your party do?", well, you stop that kind of expenditure. That's only one that we found. Can you imagine, Speaker, how many of these deals have been done that we do not know about? But we found out through an envelope under the door that proved to be correct, that this government bailed out the US-owned realtor from this building. It cost the taxpayer about \$410 million.

I think there's still more of that coming out—all the revelations. It was always "deny, deflect," and, in the gas plant scandal, "delete." That's what we know from this government, which is always denying that until the hard cold facts came out. In additional freedom-of-information requests we now know the real truth about that. It cost the taxpayer—it cost us all—\$410 million.

Then, of course, there is the \$1.1 billion spent to cancel two gas plants. My remaining 25 minutes I could use just talking about the gas plant scandal because—

Mr. Bill Walker: There are two billion reasons why.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes.

As you know, Speaker, the government insisted that it cost \$40 million to cancel when it took an Auditor General to prove to us and the rest of the province that it was actually \$1.1 billion. Again, when they say, "Vic, what would you guys do differently?", well, there is a

pretty good example of the kind of waste and scandal that surrounds this government. When you go back to the Deputy Premier when she says, "We're out of money," we now know why: Another \$1 billion was spent there.

Smart meters are another great example of yet another scandal. All along we were told it was going to be \$1 billion and then, of course, it took—yet again—another Auditor General's report to come out and tell us—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: You've got to do this: "One billion dollars!"

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You mock me. I'll tell you, Dalton McGuinty mocked me as well. I remember standing in this Legislature, Speaker, and when Dalton McGuinty was telling us it was \$40 million, I brought evidence to say it was almost \$1 billion. I stood and said, "Speaker, we have proof here that it's \$890 million." I remember the Premier laughing and mocking me just like I'm being mocked now. He said, "Oh, pretty soon it's going to be \$1 billion. No, wait; it's going to be \$2 billion." It took an Auditor General to tell this Legislature it really was \$1.1 billion, that they had been telling us all along one thing when we knew the exact opposite was true. It was \$1.1 billion. So keep mocking. Keep mocking. Keep mocking. They've gone silent, so I'll continue.

The smart meters: Again, they—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

Smart meters: They told us it was \$1 billion as well. Once in a while, you want to try to take the government's word for something, but again, we felt skeptical about \$1 billion. Research gets done; you dig in. You ask the Auditor General to look at this, and sure enough, what does the Auditor General come out and tell us? It wasn't \$1 billion; it was \$2 billion. You add the Ornge air ambulance scandal on top of this and that's almost \$1 billion; that's almost yet another billion. All we've got here is a government that is shrouded—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I understand that this member from Barrie, who's heckling, wasn't here during those scandals. We were here every day, and it took an Auditor General to be able to come out and tell us the truth. The truth is, you spent \$2 billion on smart meters. You spent \$1 billion on Ornge air ambulance.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has the floor. I would ask the members on both sides of the House to refrain from heckling so that I can hear him. Member for Nipissing—sorry to interrupt.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Obviously, Speaker, the scandals get to them, to the Liberal caucus. Even though some of them weren't here day after day to watch us being told in this Legislature one story when, brewing in this gas plant scandal hearing committee room, another story was brewing, that story finally came out. Even though the Liberal government paid \$10,000 to have files deleted, we still got to some level of the truth to understand that

there's a scandal here. It cost the taxpayers of the province of Ontario more than \$1 billion, and the government tried to hide that by deleting files. We now know that. That's all fact.

What's the result of all that? Let's move on to the result of all that. Of course, we all know that Moody's has given us two credit downgrades. That's a direct result, an absolute direct result, of this government spending, as I've just outlined, \$4 billion in money that they wasted on scandals instead of putting that into health care and other areas, and I'll get to that shortly as well. One recent analysis suggests that that has cost us \$430 million a year in interest.

The Conference Board of Canada told us loudly and clearly as well that this province can't meet its pledge to balance the books. The Auditor General told us in her last report that the debt continues to grow faster than the province's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce in their appropriately titled report on our economy—the report is called *How Bad Is It?* That's the title, Speaker. They used words such as "crisis" and "dire" in their report. That's what's sprinkled throughout their report called *How Bad Is It?* Imagine having to name a report that. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us that 97% of businesses in Ontario are concerned about our economy.

So, Speaker, we've set the financial stage here and now we know what the government has done. They've decided to have a fire sale of assets, which is included right here in Bill 144, schedule 22. They started a year ago when they borrowed the money to buy the General Motors shares. Last year, they sold the shares for \$1.1 billion, and instead of doing the prudent thing—now, think, they borrowed \$1 billion, they bought the shares, and then they sold the shares, and, instead of doing the prudent thing and putting the money back, lowering the debt by giving the money back to where they got it, instead, they plunked it into their operating costs. We now know that. It's in their own budget, on page 45 of the 2015 budget. This year they are going to have the fire sale of our valuable asset of Hydro One, and now we know through the Financial Accountability Officer and through this document of theirs, page 3 of section 7, schedule 22, that that's where the money's going. It's now going to pay down debt and deficit. They've put a line in here that is the line that tells us that it's not intended to go into transit; it's "to reimburse the crown" for the "construction or acquisition of infrastructure." The money that was already in there is now coming out to pay the debt and deficit.

I read you the line from the Ottawa Citizen. We really know that you cannot put it better than that. They nailed it down. They proved the point that, back in 2014, when they announced the \$130 billion for infrastructure, they did not need the sale of Hydro One.

The Financial Accountability Officer—let me read a quote or two from him. He said, "The province's fiscal position deteriorates because of the loss of income generated by the sale." So you know that this is going to

hurt us in the long term. It's going to hurt the financial picture. He also told us that this is really a financing decision: Do you borrow or do you sell? That's what this is all about. It has nothing to do with what the government continues to say, that that is money going into transit. We now know that. It's not about transit. It's, do you borrow or do you sell an asset? I actually would go a little further and suggest it's, do you just start managing your finances the way we do at our own homes? Again, we've seen the GM shares; I've told you that story. I told you the story about how we're going to sell off—for what could be as little as \$1.4 billion—hydro and lose \$700 million a year. Again, we're burning the furniture to heat the house. What happens next year when you don't have—

Mr. Bill Walker: What will they sell then?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, I'll tell you what they are going to sell then. We've already learned that in this book as well—buried in this book. We now know that they are going to sell the OPG building across the street here. They are going to be selling the LCBO warehouse. They are going to be selling the lake lands property in the south end on the shore line. These are the things they are going to continue to sell off to try to lower their deficit.

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One of these days, you're going to run out of things to sell to pay your bills, but your bills are still high. That's the real point. That's what we mean by burning the furniture to heat the house. When you run out of furniture, if you haven't put in a mechanism to heat your house, you're going to go cold, and that's what has happened to the investors in Ontario: They are going cold in Ontario.

This is the same group, that is selling Hydro One, that only a few months ago sold Ontario Northland, the 112-year-old company that's in northern Ontario that runs transportation and communications throughout the north. This is the same government, that's selling Hydro One, that sold Ontera. That is the telecommunications division. They sold it for \$6 million. First of all, they spent, as we disclosed in this Legislature, \$6.5 million on lawyers and consultants just to get \$6 million for a sale. In any language, spending \$6.5 million on a consultant to tell you to sell something for \$6 million doesn't seem practical to me.

Again, it took an Auditor General—not the government; the government never told us. I've asked, in order paper questions, all of these questions and never get any answers. It took an Auditor General to tell us, "By the way, the asset was worth more than that." So they sold it for \$6 million and spent \$6.5 million for consultants to tell you what to sell it for. The Auditor General told us they lost \$61 million on that sale. Talk about giving away the farm. The government lost \$61 million selling it. We're going to let these guys handle multi-billion dollar assets when they can't even transact something as small as that and, sadly, as precious as that to the people of Ontario, the people of northern Ontario.

Now it's gone. All the ongoing revenue from that asset is gone. They lost \$60,937,000, Speaker. Can you

imagine that? They knew they were losing that when they went into it. They knew that. They absolutely knew that when they went into the fire sale of Ontera, and yet they went ahead. There were seven times we talked about that in this Legislature, and I submitted order paper questions. Not once did the government stand up and say, "Look, we're going to get \$6 million for this, and I'm sorry but we're going to lose \$61 million."

It took an Auditor General; it always takes, as I said earlier, the OPP, the Auditor General, a brown envelope under the door, the Financial Accountability—it takes somebody else to give us the truth about what's happening in Ontario.

The Financial Accountability Officer also told us the initial 15% sale would significantly reduce the province's deficit. Again, he told us that. This is proven out today on the fact that they are going to reimburse the crown for the construction or acquisition of infrastructure. The Financial Accountability Officer told us the same thing: This money is going to reduce the deficit. It has nothing to do with transit. It's a shell game, and the Financial Accountability Officer laid it bare, Speaker. He told us that it was going to reduce the deficit, and he also told us that in the years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.

So let's talk about what this bill doesn't address, because there are lots of local issues that I have that I would like to speak about as well. Again, we heard loud and clear on W5 from the Deputy Premier that we're out of money. We now know that the direct consequence of our seeing the Liberal government with such massive debt and deficits are the cuts that have happened in my riding. Some 350 front-line health care workers have been fired from North Bay regional hospital. Nobody denies that number. It's 350. Two months ago alone, 158 people were fired from the hospital, bringing it to 350, which includes 100 nurses. These are 350 front-line health care workers and, over the last years, that 350 includes 100 nurses. Absolute and definitive, Speaker. They were out in front of my office, protesting the Liberal government. I cannot repeat in this Legislature what their chant was, but I'll tell you, it was nothing kind about the Liberal government.

Besides them—standing shoulder to shoulder with them—were members of the Nipissing University faculty. They are on strike today. Our university has been closed for three weeks. The students who expected to graduate in December—their year is now threatened. These young men and women who were leaving North Bay to go and start their careers are now scrambling to find a place to live, because they have given up their apartments at the end of December, and scrambling to get their job start date moved back. That is the reality of what is happening when you have a government that is out of control. The Liberal government fired 54 workers at the university, including 22 faculty.

Speaker, this is part of the problem that is happening right across Ontario. You've got a government that just

doesn't know how to stop their scandals and their waste, and it all rolls downhill until it hits these students and their families. All their problems are like big boulders rolling downhill, and they just rammed these poor students and their parents. Their parents are phoning me on a daily basis, saying, "What are you going to do? My son was scheduled to start a job in the new year. He can't go now. What are you going to do about it?" I asked the Premier, "What are you going to do about it?" That's the question I asked the Premier. I sent her a letter on Thursday. I'm looking forward to the response, Speaker. We also have 43 people at Ontario Northland who were fired by this government, and now Ontario Northland, the one-time transportation and communications company—I guess, after all these decades, I have to get used to calling them the transportation company in the north—is in a lockout. They've been locked out.

We have 350 front-line health care workers fired, 43 people at Ontario Northland fired and now they're in a lockout, and 54 people at Nipissing University fired and now they're on strike. This crisis, this chaos, is caused by the Liberal government, which cannot manage its finances in Ontario. So, when we talk about—

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's funny to you, member from Barrie, but it's not funny to the parents in Nipissing. I tell you, Speaker, it's a crisis that they've created, and we're looking for solutions from this government; we're looking for answers.

What will this bill do? You have things like an Assessment Act that's going to standardize the timeliness for property owners to request a rate reconsideration. There are things that make some sense in this bill, and then there are others that we just scratch our heads and wonder, "What is it doing there? What is it meant to achieve?"

You've got another schedule: the City of Toronto Act. We had a briefing today that talked about not only the City of Toronto Act but a municipalities act. This will be another way that the government is able to increase revenue to municipalities without transferring any cash and without having to take the blame for further tax increases. These are the kinds of things that we see will be happening.

Speaker, we are very, very concerned especially with the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act. As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned earlier, we will be bringing amendments that suggest to the government that they take these two out, because they are so huge and so grand in the scope of what they will do to the people of Ontario. You cannot slip those into a finance bill that was casually thrown at us last week without any notice, any understanding. So you know they are up to something. I guess that's the bottom line. That's the only way I can put it. They are looking to gain revenue on the backs of municipalities, on the backs of hydro ratepayers—revenue ostensibly through the Trillium Trust. You just know what they're up to, and none of it is going to serve any value to any of the people in the province Ontario.

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You've got some mundane areas. One is called the Financial Administration Act. This is going to implement a common registration process for the transfer of payments to recipients. It requires businesses to provide specified information, like the address and a name, to a ministry or public entity before engaging in a financial transaction with it, such as receiving public funds. These all may be just fine. It allows the ministry or a public agency to request this information after it has begun working with a business or adviser.

These are some housekeeping issues that they have tucked into a big bill, an omnibus bill. Quite frankly, a lot of these, if they are revenue-neutral or no new net benefit to anybody, you could tuck them all in and get that kind of a bill passed. But when you've got the Trillium Trust and the energy act piled into there—these are massive. These are earth-shattering and ostensibly budget-changing items of a great magnitude. That's not where they belong.

In schedule 6, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which I don't really see them paying any respect to—the fall economic statement should have been out in this Legislature before November 15; that's prescribed. Oops, missed that again. It's going to be 11 days late. They're eliminating the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. I can tell you, Speaker, you can see why, when you have somebody who is going to be an expert to give you the big picture. That's not what this government wants to hear about. This change in the act will remove the government's legislated requirement to consult economic experts on large-scale financial issues. For example, the economic forecast council may have easily said the Hydro One deal will have negative macroeconomic effects, but the minister is choosing, again, to silence this organization rather than use its advice.

They certainly didn't like the Financial Accountability Officer's. They dismissed the Financial Accountability Office's initial independent report on Hydro One. Then they dismissed the independent report from the Financial Accountability Officer on the state of the economy.

Now they're going to silence the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. If the government can't balance the budget with their advice, how do they plan on ever balancing a budget without their advice?

There are also some big changes coming in the Forfeited Corporate Property Act. I don't think I'll get into it in the few minutes I have left, but I'm suggesting that the legal community will want to study this bill from top to bottom as well.

There are also technical things. In the Government Advertising Act, 2004, this will correct an error in the French version so that the English and the French versions are the same. Those are the kinds of things you do bundle into a bill and get it passed. These are cleaning-up little things. Of course, again, they've had, in this case, 11 years to do it, and they haven't done it, so I can see them tidying up a lot of things.

Maybe, Speaker, I'll bring the cynic out in me, because in the four years I've been here, unlike in my

two terms as mayor of the city of North Bay, where I served with pleasure, and it was such a positive attitude—here, you become cynical very quickly because, again, it always takes the OPP or an Auditor General or an envelope under your door to get to the truth around here.

Maybe the cynic in me says they collected all of these things over the years so that they can have it ready to plunk in a bill when they needed to put in a couple of serious issues that they didn't want anybody to pay any attention to, like page 3, section 7 of schedule 22—the key line in this whole thing. All of these other almost 200 pages bury that key sentence. I'm going to stand here and say it over and over until we get through to the people of Ontario that they were told one thing, but the complete opposite is true. Now we have it in writing.

You're going to see a lot about the Horse Racing Licence Act as well. I think that's an area that anybody who's involved in horse racing should go online, download and have a look at. It integrates horse racing and gaming under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and it eliminates the Ontario Racing Commission. The ORC, a long and storied organization, will be gone. This will now all fall under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. When you combine schedule 9 with schedule 16, horse racing as we know it will now be a government-run industry under the umbrella of the AGCO—no longer the racing commission. These are the kinds of things that you will find are buried throughout this.

In closing, we know that the Liberals are attempting to make changes to the Trillium Trust Act and the Electricity Act and bury them in a 23-schedule bill, hoping nobody will notice. The changes to the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act in particular should be pulled out of this bill and brought forward separately. They're too substantive to be included with these other changes.

They're ramming this through. We're going to see closure invoked, and I know that I stand and speak because many of our members will never have an opportunity to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Nipissing for debating this very important bill and using up the whole hour lead, which is really his responsibility to his constituents, to give feedback on this bill. It's a shame the government didn't use that same opportunity to inform Ontarians about their intention of how this bill is supposedly supposed to make their lives better.

The member from Nipissing talked at length about the FAO. A little history on the FAO: It's something that the NDP brought forward when it was a minority government and got this government to agree that we install the FAO so they could have a precautionary piece to some of their financial dealings. I want to read from the Financial Accountability Officer. This is a very impressive person, because here's what he says, page 40, about this document:

"This Financial Accountability Office of Ontario ... report was prepared as an initiative of the Financial Accountability Officer. In keeping with the FAO's mandate to provide the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with independent analysis, this report makes no recommendations."

Isn't that interesting: an initiative taken by somebody who's an independent officer of this court and wants transparency and wants the public to be knowledgeable and educated on what this government is doing? They need to take a page out of the Financial Accountability Officer Act and they need to take proactive steps when they do things.

First of all, the budget bill wasn't consulted. There was no consultation with the public. That is not proactive. They have been rewarded for bad behaviour so many times, they don't recognize what bad behaviour is anymore. They're so complacent with the decisions that they've made, they can't even identify or recognize what a scandal is or what a bad decision selling off Hydro One is. Their behaviour across the way speaks volumes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It is an honour to respond to the member for Nipissing. It's unfortunate that I only have two minutes because there are so many things that the member opposite said that I would like to rebut and respond to. I will start by saying that when I ran for office, I was running against a party that was standing to cut 100,000 jobs in this province. How many jobs would have been lost in each of those members' ridings? That member also ran against our platform to spend \$130 billion on infrastructure, which would create the jobs and the quality of life for years to come that the people of Ontario deserve.

This bill is about supporting that plan. It's a plan we ran on. It was in the Liberal platform in 2014, it was in the 2014 budget and it was in the 2015 budget. This bill supports that.

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First of all, a couple of points: One, in this bill, this will crystallize our commitment to ensure that all net proceeds of pre-qualifying assets mentioned in the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget will go to the Trillium Trust. There are no games here. This is about making sure that the net proceeds from these assets go to the infrastructure that we've committed to build. Those are hospitals; those are schools; that's transit; those are roads. Those are the things that matter to that member in that riding and to all ridings across the province. That's the first thing.

The second thing I would say is, when he talked about the FAO, I humbly suggest, Mr. Speaker, that he is not fully portraying what the FAO has said. The member is saying that the FAO said we will run a deficit. He did not say that. He outlined a number of risks and a number of scenarios. In one of those scenarios he said we would balance. It's unfair to the people of Ontario to portray this as a report that says we will not balance.

He affirmed our deficit for next year and he affirmed that we always meet or exceed our targets. I would

humbly suggest that the member for Nipissing should present the full story to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That was truly amusing. I wonder how many people who are in this House today remember a number of years ago when the former Premier, Mr. McGuinty, said, "I will not raise your taxes." Does anybody remember that? Guess what happened? We have had nothing but tax increases ever since that statement was made.

Interjection: More to come.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: And there's more to come, Mr. Speaker.

The \$2-billion smart meter scandal: That's one I'd like to speak about. I have one up north at my place at Lion's Head and it's never worked. You know why it has never worked? Nobody figured out before it was put there that you can't put it in a bush because the trees block out the signal. We read the thing all the time and send in that report to Hydro.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, we'll have to pay for that. It's a \$2-billion scandal there.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the horse racing industry. This government cut that horse racing industry in half. It's almost half the amount of people who are involved in it now. The smaller tracks are having real issues trying to make any money off the current program. The horse breeding industry took a terrific hit on this thing. They stopped breeding mares because it takes three to four years to get a foal to the track. These people don't understand that, Speaker. They don't understand the gestation period of a horse or how long it takes to train a horse. They think you can turn them on and off just at their own will. That's not the way this thing works.

These agreements are supposed to have been in place a number of months ago and they've been dragging their feet and dragging their feet. Everything is coming in late, leaving an industry in limbo. I would suggest that when they say they are building up a horse racing industry, that's false.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the hour lead that the member from Nipissing presented. He was very thoughtful in his review and his scrutiny of the bill. I agreed with the majority of his synopsis on it: a shell game, diversionary, and also, the numbers don't add up. He hit on a lot of good stuff. I truly appreciate how nuanced he was on it.

This place is interesting, no doubt. This is a bizarre place. The member from Etobicoke Centre bemoaned the fact that the PC Party presented a platform plank in the last election that was to cut 100,000 jobs. They also touched, potentially, on the privatization of Hydro, not to the extent that the government was, but they presented a 50% sell-off of Ontario Hydro, not 60% like you're doing. It is indeed interesting times when the Conserva-

tive Party—the PCs—are criticizing what, ostensibly, they would have done that you are now doing. You should actually be charged with plagiarism when it comes to the actions of your government.

To the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore: Look, you campaigned against a Conservative candidate, but you are in fact doing the exact same thing. This is bizarre, Speaker. This is absolutely bizarre.

I'm happy to hear that the PCs have come around and identified and understand that selling off a major asset is not the way to go. We should maintain, protect and bolster our public services. It may be a little too late to find that, but indeed, it isn't too late to inform the government of how dire a mistake they are about to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the member from Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciated the opportunity to listen to the members from London—Fanshawe, Etobicoke Centre, Perth—Wellington and Essex.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre: He suggested that there are no games being played here. I'll again read from the binder, on page 3, from section 7 of schedule 22, some more of the wiggle words that are in here. Under section 6, actually: "The prescribed amount of designated proceeds of disposition."

I asked at the briefing, "What does that mean?" Here's what the members of the Ministry of Finance said: "The government still retains discretion in how much the prescribed amount is." Also, the word that I put in quotes is "flexibility." What that means, again, Speaker, if you look down at number 7, is that, "Amounts not exceeding the balance in the Trillium Trust may be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund."

So I asked a little bit more for an explanation of the proposed section 6, and what it means. They said, "It wouldn't mean all the revenue of the sale goes into the Trillium Trust." So when they say there are no games being played—these are all wiggle words, Speaker. They're trying to sound like it's definitive, but it's not. It is all about making sure that they can sell these assets and bring their budget deficit down.

Again, for the final time: This is to reimburse the crown for the construction or acquisition of infrastructure. It's to reimburse. We now know definitively that the sale of assets ostensibly will go into the Trillium Trust and into transit, and the money that was already there will come out and be put against the deficit. Refuting the FAO's report is not the answer.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to be here and to provide some commentary on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I was contemplating how I was going to approach this bill, because this bill came very quickly. It just dropped down on us last Wednesday. We had a very quick statement and a very quick briefing.

I was reminiscing. It feels like that shift that happened when the first speech from the throne happened. I recall it feeling like a very different tone, a very different attitude, truly almost a sense of entitlement: "In this budget bill, you will deal with these measures. There will be very little debate on them." Clearly this government is not interested even in debating or defending their own bill; they only spoke to it for 16 minutes.

This is a trend that I hope the people of this province are paying attention to, because this is not the open and transparent government that we were promised. I actually went back—it really did feel very much like that throne speech, so I went back to it.

I remember that there was a whole section called "Building from the activist centre." Do you remember the "activist centre" language? It boasted to "open up government with increased transparency and more accountability," and the people of this province were going to be involved in every decision. There was going to be a "full and active participant in your communities and in your lives"—this is the government saying that they were going to do this. This is where, of course, they promised to lead from the activist centre, which promised to "engage all Ontarians as full partners," and there were some butterflies that flew off into the distance and blue skies.

The promise, of course, was to ask for feedback before decisions were made.

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Finally—and this is probably the best piece—the government promised to put evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship.

I just raise this in the context of this budget bill because what we are seeing is almost completely the opposite of what we were promised and, I would suggest to you, what the people of this province thought they would be getting.

All of us, of course, have seen the fallout of Hydro One. Every single member in this House—I am certain of it—hears from constituents across this province. They are completely and utterly dismayed by the sell-off and privatization of Hydro One. They know very clearly that they did not hear this promise in the election.

I think it needs to be stated very clearly that this government is ignoring the power imbalance that Ontarians are feeling. Some 80% of Ontarians have said that they are not in support of this—188 municipalities. And yet, this government very clearly has blinders on and has presented a false choice to the people of this province: that if the sell-off of Hydro One does not happen, then you will not get infrastructure.

I'm going to be referencing the Financial Accountability Officer's report later.

All of this has to really do with schedule 22 of this bill. This is the little carrot that this government has led through to the people in saying—this is the false choice: "If we sell off Hydro One, you get infrastructure. If we don't sell Hydro One, no more infrastructure for the province of Ontario." It really is quite incredible to me.

Just to complete the thought on the speech from the throne from 2014: As it was being delivered—this is my recollection of it, just to be fair—it had a bit of a Shakespearean, theatrical feel to it at the time. Who knew that right in the middle of the activist centre, where everything was going to be fair, everything was going to be open, everything would be transparent, there would be a banker? It's not just any banker. He's just off that Premier's office—in my mind's eye, there's an emerald green curtain and there are some levers. Who would have thought that this Premier would have a banker using the Premier's office as the pulpit for privatization? Honestly, you couldn't even write this stuff. And what do we have as a result? We have one of the biggest and most harmful privatization plays in the history of this province.

What schedule 2 very clearly outlines is that the benefit to the people of this province—even if there was a kernel of benefit to this privatization play by this Premier, the people are not necessarily going to see any benefit from it.

I'll touch on the lack of consultation—because this is the pattern, this is the growing frustration, and this does not benefit any civic engagement in politics at all.

The concept of broadening ownership: What could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker? Until the first 15% tranche was sold, up to that point, every Ontarian owned Hydro One. So you can't broaden it to more than the entire province. But what you can do is carve away little pieces of it for Bay Street. This concept of broadening ownership needs to be challenged, day in and day out, by everyone on this side of the House.

As the finance minister and the Premier carve off this very important revenue-generating public asset, we are dealing with the fallout in our own ridings. As it relates to this Budget Measures Act, we see very clearly that the people of this province are completely caught off guard by the sale of Hydro One and they do not believe that any funding—any profit, if you will—is going to flow through the consolidated revenues and then do a little bait and switch and end up in the Trillium Trust. The people of this province have serious trust issues with this concept because they see it as a shell game.

I remember just last spring, we had a town hall in Waterloo. A fellow got up to the microphone and he was shaking; he was shaking with anger. He was enraged because he knew that he got duped. He confessed that he had actually worked on the local Liberal candidate campaign. He challenged me and he said, "Where was this in the campaign literature?" I said, "It wasn't. It wasn't there. I never read it. You didn't see it because it wasn't there." But I do think—and I will maintain to this day—that if it had been there, if this government had clearly campaigned on carving off Hydro One for privatization purposes, we would have had a very different election result.

We are not buying what this government is selling, and I'm happy to report that, actually, most Ontarians are not as well. This leads me to delve into schedule 22.

Before we actually go into the way the funding would flow through privatization, through the private shares

from the sell-off of Hydro One, we really need to take a step back and look at, how did we even get here? I think it's really important that people understand how serious these trust issues are. The members on the other side of the House will remember that before the election, Mr. Sousa and the Premier insisted that the government did not wish to privatize Hydro One or OPG, and that the advisory council had been told to "give preference to owning rather than selling core" interests. This is a matter of public record. I want to get it on the record here.

In April 2014, there was a speech to the Economic Club of Canada by Mr. Sousa, who said, "'Continuing public ownership, however, remains a key priority'....

"There are ways to improve efficiency and optimize financial performance of any company, including OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.... 'We will not do what the previous PC government did ... with the fire sale of Highway 407.'"

These words come back to haunt you. On October 20, we asked the Premier why she thought public hydro belonged in the hands of private speculators. We put that question to the Premier. The Premier denied any plan to sell public hydro: Ed Clark "has said quite clearly that he doesn't believe that selling those assets is the right answer. He has said that."

"I believe that the leader of the third party is probably having a bit of a hard time framing the question because in fact Ed Clark has said he agrees that selling those assets is not the right thing to do."

I'm glad that this is a matter of public record. I would have been happier to have had the government have the fortitude to stay and stand by these words. Unsatisfied, of course, our leader demanded the government seek the approval of the public before proceeding with the sale of public hydro, and then the Premier responded, saying in turn, "I'm laughing because the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is replaying the attacks that were coming at us from the third party before the election....

"We have said we believe that these assets need to be in the hands of the people of Ontario. Ed Clark has agreed with that."

Do you remember this? It's a matter of Hansard, so I'm just quoting it.

Then we go back again—because we have been trying to nail down this very slippery government on where privatization is going to happen and when it is not going to happen, and with, of course, the further promise of selling off more public assets. Once again, we cannot get an answer. We cannot pull an answer out of anyone from that side of the House. But that's when the Premier then said, "It must actually be very hard for the leader of the third party to ask these questions. She knows that we're not selling off the assets. She knows perfectly well that that was one of the parameters as Ed Clark went into this review. She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands...." Well, I guess something desperate happened in that little curtained room off the Premier's

office that says—something must have happened, because these are their words. These are the Premier's words and her promise to the people of this province.

Once again, of course, on October 27—this is actually just over a year ago—Mr. Sousa replied, “We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets.” On November 3, once again, the Premier said, “Let’s just be clear: Despite what the NDP are saying, we asked the council to retain the government’s long-term ownership of these assets. In fact, what Ed Clark said on, October 17: ‘We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.’ So, in fact, there is not a sell-off of these companies,” as we would have them believe.

1530

This is a huge shift from where the Premier was, where Mr. Clark was, just a year ago. We have the proof in the Hansard, in this House, which demonstrates a very serious retraction of that position.

As we move forward with schedule 22—I think the critic for the PC Party actually shares some of the concerns that we have. There is definitely some crossover because we both received briefings from great ministry staff. Mine was this morning at 8:30, and I really want to commend the staff who work in those respective ministries and departments. They have their little bits and pieces that they really know very well. I just wanted to put that on the record. They were very helpful.

But just so that people understand fully that schedule 22 of Bill 144, the existing Trillium Trust is completely repealed with Bill 144 except for a few definitions in s. 1. Instead of recording—and this is the key part—all receipts and disbursements of public money to and from the trust, the accounts shall now track:

“1. Prescribed amounts of designated proceeds of disposition of qualifying assets.

“2. Prescribed amounts of prescribed non-cash benefits that are recognized by the crown in connection with dispositions of qualifying assets.

“3. All expenditures of public money under this act.”

So in other words, the Trillium Trust is no longer a bank account. The way that the government talks about the Trillium Trust is that it’s this bucket of money. As you sell off Hydro One or bits and pieces of buildings that were once owned by the state, by the government, all that money goes right over into this little trust fund, and someday, in a far, faraway land, Kitchener-Waterloo will get a GO train that actually goes two ways.

That actually is not the case. The Trillium Trust is no longer a bank account recording the flow of money in and out of the trust. No money is actually ever deposited into or withdrawn from the Trillium Trust. It is now an accounting procedure for recording the designation of proceeds and non-cash benefits under the act, as well as for labelling certain infrastructure spending from the consolidated revenue as authorized expenditures under the act.

I’m pretty sure that if this government had done some consultation on at least this component, we would have seen some genuine concern and interest from stake-

holders who want to see infrastructure actually come to be realized, the infrastructure plan of this government to be realized. We’re not quite sure what that plan is altogether because there are so many strings pulling these projects along, depending on the day of the week, that it is hard to find what the real priority is—which is why I stand in this House, as does the other member, from Kitchener-Conestoga, and we ask questions. The only way that we can see this government following through on priorities, or so-called priorities, is if we keep it on the front burner.

This morning, when I asked the question about the one-way GO trains that go in the morning and then the other one-way GO trains that come from Toronto to Kitchener in the afternoon, which I know you sometimes have to take as well—those are not pleasant experiences, nor is this a transit option, quite honestly, that meets the needs of commuters. The CEO from Thalmic Labs, I think, last week said it’s absolutely ludicrous, in the economy of Ontario right now, to expect people to be on a train for over four hours, because productivity is impacted and productivity is also connected to connectivity. A two-hour slow train and the promise of two more slow trains in the morning and two more slow trains in the afternoon on the way back isn’t really a 2015-16 option.

The longer this gets dragged on—people lose hope and they just get in their car. Like myself, they get in the car at 3:30 this morning, which I can tell you is not the best idea. I just want to put that on the record.

Back to the Trillium Trust: In addition to the existing assets that have been designated by regulation, the following assets will be designated under the Trillium Trust: the province’s shares in Hydro One and Hydro One Brampton; the head office lands of the LCBO; the Ontario Power Generation head office building; and the OPG Lakeview lands. As with the existing Trillium Trust Act, the designated proceeds of disposition is equal to the gross proceeds minus the book value of the assets.

As far as I can tell, the idea is that when money is withdrawn from the consolidated revenue fund for infrastructure expenditures, the government may record, as an authorized expenditure, an amount up to the total balance in the trust.

The government is given broad regulatory authority to prescribe “anything that is permitted or required by this act to be prescribed, designated or done by regulation or in accordance with the regulations.”

The minister has a huge amount of power. It will never come to us. It will all be done by regulation, which, you must admit, Mr. Speaker, is of course the growing trend. This government would bring barely anything to this House if they could just get it done through regulation, which is ironic, because when they can actually do something by regulation which would be beneficial to constituents, they can’t find the time of day to do it. So it does go back to this idea of priorities.

As I said, the government is given broad regulatory authority to prescribe “anything that is permitted or required by this act to be prescribed, designated or done

by regulation or in accordance with the regulations.” As with the existing act, there is still no guarantee that money from an asset sale would be dedicated to the trust. The finance critic for the PC Party also mentioned this.

Actually, I want to be really open and transparent: This came up in the briefing this morning. The government’s lawyer said, “No, no, it will, because it says ‘may.’ It says ‘may.’”

“May,” in their opinion, is permissive. Its language is permissive. We wanted to know: Why wouldn’t it say “shall”? If the true intention of these funds is to be invested in infrastructure and dedicated solely to infrastructure and transit investment, then why not make it completely clear?

I had this quote. Of course, I went right back to my office and did some research, but I don’t think I printed it off. It goes through the whole definition of “may” and “shall” and legalese. At the very heart of the matter, though, of course, is the trust issue, right? That remains the key issue.

As I said, there is still no guarantee that the amounts credited to the trust represent actual money. I think our energy critic has done an excellent job in addressing the non-cash revenue items. It is also now possible to increase the balance of the Trillium Trust simply by designating a gain on paper with respect to assets that the government already owns.

We will be addressing schedule 22 going forward. Hopefully, it gets to the finance committee very quickly and we get a chance to bring some of those concerns to the fore.

I think I was focused mostly on schedule 22 this weekend, when I was reviewing and studying the bill. My daughter was doing word problems. You remember the joy of word problems, or the joy of grade 9 math? My husband was working with her, because I don’t have the patience for word problems.

I was thinking about why we’re here. Aside from going through the entire history and the backtracking on what this government has said and who they’ve said it to, I was beginning to think about—the focus on transit right now is a little ironic. You’ll remember, Mr. Speaker, because you were here, that in 2010, when the Big Move was supposed to be moving, the Premier, who was then the Minister of Transportation, removed \$4 billion from that Big Move. That was supposed to be dedicated to build transit.

Of course, the Premier now lays claim to this activist centre, but it turns out that the activist at the centre now is a banker. So, this is a whole new world that we’re dealing with. This is not the progressive model—the open and transparent model—we heard about at length during the election.

1540

Certainly, we did fight for the Financial Accountability Officer to be a part of this Legislature. We fought at the time, and we still think this government needs an independent officer to look at financial decisions before they happen, which is why I think it was so very valuable to see the Financial Accountability Officer, of his

own initiative, looked at the Hydro One sale—the privatization—and came back and sat us all down and said, “Listen, these are our concerns,” and I’m going to go through those concerns in a second.

After dealing with schedule 22 and raising some of our concerns, I think I want to spend a little time on schedule 12, the EllisDon bill. Actually, I want to stay on electricity, because I think electricity is pretty interesting—what we are seeing in the province.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I’ll take care of EllisDon.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You’ll do EllisDon? Yes, I know you will.

I think that, in schedule 3, you’ll see some pretty interesting analysis, and I suspect you will be hearing about schedule 3 quite a bit. This has to do with the Electricity Act, 1998. It has to do with residual stranded debt and stranded debt—all references to residual stranded debt and stranded debt are erased from the act. Wouldn’t it be nice if you could just take an eraser? There are several sections that are repealed, and the Minister of Finance is no longer required to determine or report the value of the residual stranded debt or stranded debt or announce when the residual stranded debt has been retired. Why would you actually put that in a bill? If you’re the finance minister, this doesn’t speak to accountability or transparency.

There is a really important thing, though, that stems out of this, coming from some pretty interesting criticism of this government. I don’t know if you know Tom Adams Energy. He does a bit of a blog, and he reported back on Bill 144 and rightly addresses some of the concerns around the OEFC. Really, the government has been silent on explaining the impact of the sale of Hydro One on the OEFC, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., until now. He goes into two themes, but what I really want to get on the record, because I completely agree with him, is that he goes on to say—I quote this from November 20, just last week:

“Bill 144, an omnibus budget measures act introduced November 18th, contains the first clues so far disclosed as to how the government intends to fill the hole it has created at OEFC with the sale of Hydro One.”

Actually not a lot of people have been talking about this.

“One section of Bill 144 repeals section 92(4) of the Electricity Act. That section of the Electricity Act would have redirected the flow of municipal taxes back to municipalities (and away from OEFC) once a portion of OEFC’s liabilities called the Residual Stranded Debt were paid off. What all of this means is that Wynne’s signature initiative to use the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to build transit is to be achieved in part through the farcical finance of seizing revenue from another level of government. The amount of money is small in the scheme of things but it illustrates the government’s reliance on astrology and unicorn sightings to guide their electricity and transit plans.”

I couldn’t really get up and say this, but I just did because I’m quoting it directly from Tom Adams. He goes on to say:

"The financial flows underpinning Ontario's electricity system, particularly OEFC, were designed from back in the days of Mike Harris as a shell game. The Libs," I'm sorry, the Liberals, "have taken the shell game to ever greater levels of subterfuge. The government uses this shell game to sustain the provincial Auditor General's continued confusion about the reality of the situation."

He goes on because he thinks the Auditor General should be calling out the government on all of this, which is really hard to do because even when the Financial Accountability Officer does so, even when he releases a report—and the report is under all of those papers over there—the government: It's like they're reading a different document.

The Financial Accountability Officer has said very clearly that the revenue that they expect to get from the sell-off of Hydro One needs to be challenged. If you've been listening to what I said about schedule 22 and the Trillium Trust, and going way, way back—it feels like a long time to the throne speech and putting evidence over partisanship and research over ideology—you remember those days? If you forget for just a second that at the activist centre we have a banker, then you can look at the financial accountabilities report, because whatever money this government has said—this goes back to the false choice point: that they will somehow garner \$9 billion from selling Hydro One, which, up until two weeks ago, we all owned, and they're going to broaden ownership to Bay Street but not the rest of us in this province. And there's a long-term cost for this policy decision.

The FAO did his job and he came out and he said that instead of the promised \$4 billion for infrastructure, the financial accountability report shows that the sale will yield only \$1.4 billion to \$3.1 billion in actual spendable cash. As I pointed out last week at our opposition day motion, in 2013-14 this government failed to spend \$1.2 billion that they had budgeted. It was right there in the budget for transit, and they failed to spend it. Then in the 2013-14 budget they failed to spend almost \$400 million.

This is a government that—even when they come forward with an infrastructure plan, even when they have a budget line in the budget and the budget passes, they fail to spend that money wisely. They fail to invest it wisely. This, once again, goes back to the premise that this is completely a false choice: that if we don't sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure. It's nonsensical. It makes no sense whatsoever.

When you follow the money, which you'll understand is not the easiest thing to do at this place, and the Financial Accountability Officer challenges the projected profits from the sale of Hydro One, we need to remind people in this province that the \$1.4 billion to \$3.4 billion in actual cash, which would potentially go through consolidated revenues and potentially be moved into a piece of transit infrastructure investment, is roughly 1% of the government's total \$130-billion 10-year infrastructure promise, or \$140 million per year, equal to

just 0.1%—one 10th of one per cent—of the province's budget.

That's why we have been challenging this concept—back to that throne speech—that this is going to be an inclusive government that is open and transparent and puts people first. The only people they are putting first with the sell-off Hydro One is that 1%. The 1% is going to do very fine. You can say it: Bay Street got to the Hydro One trough as fast as they could two weeks ago. It sold like hotcakes because they know that they're going to make their money.

Conservation, which should be first and foremost—some of our policy directions around Hydro One—is going to fall right by the wayside because when it's the shareholders who are driving a company, the shareholder's interests trump a policy like conservation, because they're not going to make as much money because we're not going to be using as much energy.

Back to the FAO report: As a result of the various complicated accounting procedures, there will be non-cash proceeds in the form of equity revaluations that will bring the total credit to the Trillium Trust up to \$3.3 billion. These paper assets will have to be converted into cash in order to pay bills, perhaps by borrowing against paper assets.

This is, without a doubt, a bit of a shell game, and it makes it harder for us to track the money, especially the dedicated funds for infrastructure and transit, which this government says the sale of Hydro One is all about. That's what they claim.

1550

Schedule 6 of Bill 144 looks to amend and dissolve the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. You'll see that every budget—I have one here—is rubber-stamped by the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, but there are currently no appointees to the council. They have allowed this to wither and die on the vine, and I think it's probably because the council just threw up their hands and gave up. Anyway, that's my interpretation of it.

But fortunately, while it is discouraging that this council has been dissolved—and the Ministry of Finance now "anticipates continuing to consult with independent experts relating to macroeconomic forecasts and assumptions to be used in the preparation of the budget and fiscal plan"—they need only go right to the Financial Accountability Officer. His mandate is very clear. Yet when he came out with the report around Hydro One and the revenue projections from the sale of Hydro One, this government was not receptive to that research and to that economic modelling. In fact, they weren't so cooperative either. They didn't want to share the information, which leads us to this whole other gray area of commercial sensitivity or cabinet confidentiality around commercial ventures.

Hydro One, up to that point, was a public asset. It's interesting that the government was so reluctant to make the case. So the Financial Accountability Officer comes to the table and says, "It's my job to look into these issues. Can you please share this information with me?"

and they say, "No." Now, if the business case was there, then I think they would be very forthcoming and very proud of it. Right?

So just to go back, the FAO was clear that the economic benefit of infrastructure investments was not going to be as the government projected. Now the government is going to come back, and they're going to say, "Well, he didn't take into account the economic benefit—period—of all infrastructure benefits." I want to get this on the record. The FAO made it very clear that the economic benefit of infrastructure investments was irrelevant to his conclusion. His analysis assumed that the infrastructure would be built in any case. His analysis compared what would happen if the government financed by borrowing or by sale proceeds. This, actually, came up in our briefing as well. The FAO was very clear: Either way the infrastructure will be built. You're either going to borrow for it, or you're going to sell off a component of Hydro One for \$1.4 billion, which is about the amount of money you didn't spend on infrastructure in the last two budgets because you couldn't get your act together, or you were too focused on the politics of infrastructure.

Just to move forward, the FAO estimated that the province will lose net revenues of \$444 million to \$487 million a year by 2025. Now, I know the government isn't that focused on 2025. I know that they are very focused on 2017-18, but what a cost it's going to be. We already know that in the 2014 budget there was a 6% reduction in program spending in every ministry except for five. Some of those ministries, like health care for instance, were frozen, but that is a cut. In the last year's budget there was a 5.5% reduction in program spending in every ministry except for a few, like justice. Yet, those other ministries that are so-called safe—there's no safe area in the province of Ontario.

But the government is not doing some of the work that they should be doing, which is something that they could have included in this particular piece of legislation, to address taxable compliance, for instance. Tax compliance is a big issue in the province of Ontario, closing some of those corporate loopholes to actually generate some revenue and also addressing the way infrastructure is funded in the province of Ontario.

With that, I'd like to comment on the public-private partnerships that the Auditor General referenced in her report. There is no good reason why any government anywhere in Canada should be borrowing money at an almost 28% interest rate to fund infrastructure. This government could easily—I mean, they can't leave the country; some of them, I think, sometimes would like to. But they could get an interest rate of 2.8% to 3% for those infrastructure projects.

Just to give full attention and weight to the FAO's report as it relates, because I think the FAO is going to have—I hope his mandate will have some impact on the next budget that comes to the fore. Instead of shrinking the province's net debt by \$5 billion, the FAO said, the debt could actually increase by nearly \$300 million by

2025 as a result of the Hydro One sale, and perhaps as much as \$2.7 billion, if the government eliminated the debt retirement charge on non-residential electricity bills.

He says, "In years following the sale of 60 per cent of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale." This is on the first page of the FAO report, and it certainly should warrant some attention by this government, for sure.

Now I think I should move on to schedule 12.

Section 12: This is like Groundhog Day, Mr. Speaker, this EllisDon bill, sneaking it into an omnibus bill—

Mr. Bill Walker: Without a shadow of a doubt.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Without a shadow of a doubt, obviously.

This new budget measures bill introduced last week contains a section that allows the government to impose a settlement on a years-long dispute between a giant construction firm, EllisDon, and a handful of trade unions.

This came up at the briefing as well. I asked the staff from the labour ministry: Was he not concerned about this being a precedent-setting move? Because this already came up to the floor of this Legislature, and members of the government did not support it.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Here it is. All of the Liberal caucus voted against the bill on third reading, including yourself.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, I voted in favour.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But you weren't in the cabinet at the time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I voted in favour.

Ms. Catherine Fife: All of the Liberal caucus voted against the bill. Anyway, this was from the Queen's Park briefing—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'll correct my record if I'm wrong. Yes, I will.

But it's really interesting, though, because during the minority government, you tried to bring in this bill to the Legislature. The member from Lambton-Kent also tried to bring it here.

This morning, one of the cabinet ministers said the floor of the Legislature is not a place to negotiate collective bargaining—and it is not. The fact of the matter—the real story—is that there is a court case that went as far as the Supreme Court, that was in favour of the trade unions, and the Ontario government has chosen to abrogate that decision.

This quote actually came from Eric Comartin, who is the general counsel of the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference. He said that this is really—I mean, there was mediation happening; it was ongoing. It really is unprecedented for a government to try to impose, especially in this manner.

This is an omnibus bill. I remember the days when the Liberal government had a lot to say about omnibus bills and how undemocratic they were and how they were just political tools to squeeze opposition party members.

There's a lot of concern about this. It should not be in a Budget Measures Act bill. I think all of us know it. I think I even heard the Conservatives say that it should be pulled out or seriously amended, but I can't quite be sure about that.

Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate, why did this Budget Measures Act come to us at this particular juncture? It seemed to me, when I first got a quick look at it, that it was really designed to make up for some of the things that the finance minister had failed to accomplish during the year. That includes everything from the integration of horse racing and gaming regulation under the Ministry of Finance. It redresses an old OLRB decision of EllisDon to the Sarnia working agreement. It further facilitates the sale of beer outside of the LCBO. I'll never forget the day that this government released that, "Six-packs over here. Here's the beer. Forget about the Hydro One sale." But, you know, for the most part it did work; people were talking more about beer than they were about Hydro One.

1600

Mr. Paul Miller: Beer is important.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know, beer is important, especially craft brewers. Craft brewers are important.

Then, finally, it strengthens the penalties for the legal production of contraband tobacco and fundamentally changes the Trillium Trust, where Hydro One proceeds are supposed to go in order to fund infrastructure.

So what remains an interest for us is about following the money as it relates to this act. As I said, schedule 22 of the Trillium Trust is created as this dedicated fund, but doesn't really hold on to the intent of that because it says "it may." The EllisDon bill, this is like Groundhog Day for this piece of legislation. The electricity act, under schedule 3—I need to keep coming back to this false choice of how the Hydro One privatization and sell-off and carving off of that important public asset and revenue-driving agency affects how infrastructure is funded in the province of Ontario.

Just to go back to that word problem, and listening to my daughter try to figure that out: We have this sort of dichotomy here in the province of Ontario, where we have these promises of infrastructure and transit, we have reannouncements of announcements on this file, and then we have the reality of standing up in this House and asking the questions as to when the money is going to flow and when the action is going to happen.

I keep thinking about—of course, the Kitchener-Waterloo GO train is on my mind. I raised it this morning. I didn't get much of an answer, but I'll just keep trying.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That was a great answer.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, no, it was a great answer in your world—that's the unicorn world that we were talking about earlier. I just want to pose a little question to you, a word question: Train A is travelling 70 kilometres per hour and it leaves Toronto heading towards Kitchener, 110 kilometres away. At the same time, train B, travelling 60 kilometres an hour, leaves Kitchener heading toward Toronto. When do the trains meet? How

far from each city do they meet? Obviously, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, it's a trick question, I'm afraid: GO trains can't travel to and from Kitchener and Toronto at the same time. There is no two-way, all-day GO train service, and there doesn't seem to be a timeline to complete this promise from the government either.

But the point remains: Word problems can certainly help us illustrate some of the long history of bait and switch in the short history of the Wynne government. That's what I was getting at when I went through the entire history of what this government has said about how they feel about public assets, how they value public assets, but then they turn around and they bury them in an omnibus bill or say that they campaigned on the sell-off of Hydro One when, if you talk to any individual who campaigned in 2014, there was no clear delineation in any of that campaign literature that said that Hydro One would be sold off to fund infrastructure.

I will maintain that that is, indeed, a false choice. You cannot realistically say to the people of this province that if we don't support the sell-off of Hydro One, we get no infrastructure. Your real plan is just to address this ongoing deficit which you created. That really is so disrespectful to the people of this province. You certainly didn't take it to the people, and yet you ridicule the PC Party for campaigning on killing 100,000 jobs. It's the same thing.

You remember Don Drummond also said that. Don Drummond was on The Agenda just prior to the election. He's very clearly on the record as saying, "They can criticize the PC caucus all they want; the 6% program spending cuts in the 2014 budget, the 5.5% program spending cuts in the 2015—those equate to cuts to those services. Those are public services, those are public jobs that are getting cut by this government." We concur with Don Drummond: At the end of this term, by 2017-18, this government will be able to boast that they have the lowest program public service spending in the country. They will have outpaced Mike Harris like you would not believe.

In fact, Mike Harris didn't even have 6% program spending cuts in his budgets, and they burned him in effigy on the front lawn of this Legislature. I know, because I was there.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: What did Frances Lankin say about that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Obviously the government doesn't like being held to account. They really don't. I've gone through the entire history. It's a matter of Hansard and it's a matter of public record.

It's so funny that you just mentioned—one of the members from across the way just mentioned Frances Lankin. I'll just finalize this by saying that we did table a motion calling for a referendum before selling public assets like Hydro One. If you were really ruling from the activist centre, you would have considered a referendum.

In his reply to the motion, Glen Murray—I'm sorry, the minister—said, "You know, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats can be so endearing." This is so condescend-

ing. "For some reason, in her desperate need to run against herself for leader of her own party, the NDP seems to lack the very intellectual integrity they accuse everyone else of not having. It's fascinating....

"Let me just quote the chair of a process that's still going on, that if the third party wanted to influence, they certainly could if they weren't afraid to take a position on anything. Mr. Clark, along with Ms. Ecker and Ms. Lankin, says, 'We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO'—in the public domain. "He said that just a couple of days ago."

So Frances Lankin, to your point, weighed in on this, and I'm glad that she did. But as was said in Hamlet, I think you protest too much on this point, because we do have the record. We have the Hansard. We have the public record.

This government started down a path. Mr. Clark came on board and clearly made the case that you were in such financial disarray as a government that you would never meet your deficit reduction deadline, and you wouldn't reach it because you had seriously dug such a serious hole for the province of Ontario.

There's a lot to say about this Budget Measures Act. I've spoken for 51 or 52 minutes on it. You spoke for 16 minutes on it. I don't think that that has ever happened, that a government doesn't speak fully to a piece of legislation that they are bringing to the floor of this Legislature—16 minutes.

The criticism is coming from all sides, though, from everywhere. That was not the promise in that throne speech, just to bookend it. There was the promise not to fall into that partisan trap and to put evidence over ideology. If this government was truly committed to that, then they would take that FAO report and take a serious step back on the sale of Hydro One.

I'll have to quote Tom Adams again, from Ideas for a Smarter Grid. Actually, Hydro One CEO Anthony Haines is totally complimenting this government on this sort of "sell here, reinvest there; put it under this shell, slide it under this shell; a little bit through consolidated revenues, not really in the Trillium Trust, but leave it up to regulation; and then the finance minister gets to call it whatever he wants." That's essentially what this budget act actually does.

But of course, this sort of criticism comes from Mr. Haines, who has been a leading proponent for several of the government's most mismanaged, wasteful energy initiatives, including smart meters, conservation programs and energy storage, so keeping good company right there.

1610

When we brought our opposition day motions to this floor last week, I made it really clear that we were doing so on behalf of the people of this province. The people of this province deserve to have a say. They didn't get an opportunity to do so during the election, because they didn't know that this government was going to sell off Hydro One. As I pointed out, and as the Financial Accountability Officer has pointed out, Hydro One is not

a deal that is going to benefit the people of this province. In fact, there are some long-term negative impacts on revenues that come into this province the more this province goes down this road. In the long run, there will actually be an increased deficit—the Financial Accountability Officer has done the economic modelling—every year except after 2017-18, when there will be a miracle and some balance will happen.

I'm waiting to hear the fall economic statement later this week, because as I pointed out already, as did the FAO, this government has greatly exaggerated the revenues they are supposed to be bringing in because they didn't use appropriate nominal GDP levels. So we see future cuts coming; in fact, even stronger cuts than we saw in the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget. This government seems complacent, or amenable, to the idea of cutting programs that actually affect the most vulnerable people in this province.

Just this weekend, I was at a Home of Their Own conference; I was speaking there. Just as a small example of this, back in 2006 the government went to these families who have severely disabled children and said, "You know what? We're going to get out of the group home business. We would really like you to work together, and we'll support you in that." That was in 2006. So three parents I have been working with in Kitchener-Waterloo for three years are on the hook right now. They bought a house and provided some services, but they're not receiving any support from the government, except for two days a month. They bought the house and do the maintenance, and the government is not willing to come to—this family didn't even qualify for some pilot money, even though the government told them to go out and buy this house and work collaboratively together. You know, one day they're not going to be able to take care of their severely disabled children. One day the state is going to have to take care of them instead. Why not be proactive? That should be a priority that this government is focused on.

That's sort of like this walking contradiction we are seeing here in this Legislature. With great urgency and at the last minute, we get a budget bill that reintroduces the EllisDon bill, compromises collective bargaining in the province of Ontario and provides no clarity, really, around the Trillium Trust and this false choice of selling Hydro One: If you sell Hydro One, you get infrastructure; if you don't sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure. This makes no sense, especially when you follow the money.

With that, as always, I think we are going to be caucusing this bill, but there are clearly pieces in this legislation that were meant to put us in a corner, which doesn't speak to that original intent from that activist centre, where there is a banker now, of working collaboratively with the other parties and trying to strengthen this province, to build this province up by not tearing it down and not hurting the most vulnerable people in the province.

With that, I will leave it there. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a real pleasure for me to speak today on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act.

In response to the member from Waterloo, I just wanted to point out that the comment she made that it wasn't in the campaign literature—what was in the campaign literature was that we were going to review our assets. The electorate supported our leadership and our ability to keep the economy moving, and we made a commitment to do that. We are standing by the commitment, and Ontarians expect that we are going to make those necessary investments in infrastructure and transportation.

I would also like to point out that the budget bill is supporting infrastructure funding in the region of Waterloo. I've been having a look at some of the figures that we're looking at right now. As has been mentioned many times, this is the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario: \$130 billion in 10 years. In the Waterloo region, we have been looking at an Infrastructure Ontario loan program, formerly the OSIFA, \$38,521,300; Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative, \$7,000,300; and Investing in Ontario, \$22,596,000. I know that the member from Waterloo must be appreciative of these investments in her riding.

The changes are necessary, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to support and implement our plan for Ontario. The legislation will help grow our economy and keep our communities moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo. She echoed a number of comments made by my colleague from Nipissing, Vic Fedeli.

I think a lot of the concern I've had in reading through the 200 pages—again, it was tabled just over the weekend—is the wiggle room that the Liberals have built into, certainly, the Trillium Trust and the Electricity Act. Both of those should have been money that was utilized from the sale of anything, such as the fire sale of Hydro One, to go against that deficit so we don't saddle our pages and our youth any more than this government already has. I think it was alluded to that the Deputy Premier actually has committed and commented on W5 that the Liberal government is out of money, so this truly is a fire sale. It really concerns me. That is money that should be paying down the debt so there's more money to actually spend on our programs for our less fortunate, our needy, our health care, our Community Living groups, those types of groups, as opposed to putting money into a budget that will make the Liberal books look better for a very short term.

The Financial Accountability Officer has come out already and said that this sale is going to be a couple of years of short-term gain but there's going to be long-term pain. We're going to lose that \$700-million revenue stream in perpetuity, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Etobicoke Centre, when he stood a little while ago, talked about some cuts. I want to ask that member how he believes that the 354 cuts that have already been made in the riding of Nipissing alone, or the 50 educational assistants cut in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, are not deemed to be cuts, and how they're going to balance the budget in 2018 when they're adding to that deficit on an annual basis moving forward—yet they're miraculously going to balance the budget in 2018. I want him to assure me there won't be one single cut, Mr. Speaker, because that's what he's purporting out there: that there will be no cuts under this government. We know it's not true; we know it's not reality.

This, again, is another case of the Liberals utilizing legislation for their own gain as opposed to what's best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd just like to say that we keep hearing this number, \$4 billion, about the sale of Hydro and what it's going to generate. Some critics have said it's more like \$1.5 billion. Regardless, I've got an answer for everybody that would have solved everybody's problems. It's very simple. We wouldn't even be doing this Budget Measures Act if they would have done this. We did have a few scandals: Ornge, eHealth, gas plants, MaRS, you name it. The total of those scandals came to \$3.2 billion. There's a nice chunk of that \$4 billion they've got to raise for revenue for infrastructure.

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Then, Speaker, I've got another suggestion. If this government had done a forensic audit of every ministry that's under their jurisdiction, you probably could have saved hundreds of millions of dollars more of waste. None of this would have been taking place; we wouldn't have had this act; we wouldn't have had to do anything if we hadn't wasted billions of dollars. You wouldn't have had to have a sale of hydro. We still could have had 100% of hydro, and done the infrastructure for the next 10 years, in the savings alone.

It doesn't take a financial genius to figure out that if you have a one-time sale at \$4 billion and you're giving up \$600 million or \$700 million a year in profit, it doesn't take too long to make up that \$4 billion in money that you're getting from the hydro revenue. In probably four or five years, you'd have it all back. But, no, we're going to give it up for the next 50 or 100 years. Whoever out there bought the shares is going to make a lot of money off the backs of the taxpayers of Ontario—a bad deal; bad management by this government for the last years.

A financial nightmare is on the way, and believe me, I'm sure you haven't heard it here first, but you will continue to hear it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm very pleased to be able to stand today and make some comments regarding Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act.

Bill 144 does amend a number of acts, but I want to comment on what I believe is the recurring theme that we're continually hearing from the opposition and the third party. I understand that their role is to just oppose—that's what they do—but this initiative of broadening the ownership of Hydro One is the right thing to do.

In my riding and in this House, we hear constantly, "What are you, as a government, going to do about hydro rates?" I've had constituents come, and I speak to them on a regular basis.

We're acting on this, and we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One because, I believe, a private sector influence will certainly result in a better-run company over the long term. They're going to need to find the efficiencies required to operate, and they're also going to have to look at possibly diversifying in the future.

Of course, we all know that our commitment is to grow the economy through infrastructure investments. But it's important to talk about what this actually is about. This is about transmission and distribution. This is not about generation. This is not about any other charges on your hydro bill. It's transmission and distribution, which is a certain percentage.

When I explain to people that we have \$15 billion in the value of transmission and distribution just sitting there—and, yes, we've put billions of dollars of upgrades into the system across the province over the last number of years. So you have an asset, and I think the responsible thing to do when you have an asset of that value is, you maximize that asset and you bring the returns back to the people of Ontario.

When we hear some of the members talk about the people of Ontario owning Hydro One in its entirety, we're going to continue to own 40% of a better-run company, a more efficiently run company, a more diversified company. I've got confidence in that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That includes our questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her response.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Kingston and the Islands, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

It's interesting. The member from Kingston and the Islands asked, do I not value these investments? I will value them when they happen. That's the issue.

On the record, we have promises from 2011 just on the GO train. We have one-way GO trains in the morning and we have one-way GO trains in the afternoon, but that was not the promise. The promise is on the record by the former Minister of Transportation that two-way, all-day GO would happen in five years. Electrification and getting rid of diesel trains would happen in 10 years. That is what the people of Kitchener-Waterloo were told. So will I value it? Is it my job to stand up and try to hold the government to account each and every day on these promises? Of course.

Was I happy that the member from Kitchener Centre this weekend said, "You're right: These trains need to be

faster"? They do, because a two-hour-and-10-minute one-way commute from Kitchener-Waterloo to Toronto is unacceptable. It is a productivity issue.

I think that of those 30 kilometres worth of track that are still up for debate, CN won't even let this government go onto the property, do the evaluation and measure what needs to happen, because otherwise—two more slow trains doesn't do the trick. Surely we can agree on that, Mr. Speaker.

So this budget bill, though—the Kool-Aid that some folks are drinking on the sell-off of Hydro One and the broadening of the ownership is absolutely outrageous. I can tell you that I don't think it's going to benefit the infrastructure bottom line in this province one iota. We're not buying what you are selling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, at the outset, I would like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Vaughan and Burlington.

Twice each year, generally in the spring and the fall, governments all across Canada will do a bill that cleans up some out-of-date laws, amends laws where circumstances have changed and introduces new statutes whose impact is not particularly broad in scope. For us in western Mississauga, one of those changes means that at Sobeys in Churchill Meadows, at Metro in Meadowvale and Lisgar and at Longo's in Meadowvale, we'll now be able to buy beer in the stores if they so apply, just as they can now sell Ontario VQA wine in their stores.

Now, earlier this year, a report to the province asked why stores could sell wine but not beer. Many of us have visited other states and provinces, other countries, other jurisdictions, where society, as we knew it, had not collapsed with the broadening of the distribution of wine and beer in retail outlets.

The bill also puts in place measures that will affect our electricity bills, and I'd like to talk about that in a little bit of detail. Back in 1999, the former Conservative government in Ontario dismantled the old Ontario Hydro to look at selling the corporation. In doing so, they set up Hydro One to own the towers, the wires, the substations and some of Ontario's local distribution. Hydro One now does about 24% of the local distribution in the province of Ontario.

That outgoing PC government also established Ontario Power Generation, which owned the dams and the Darlington and Pickering nuclear stations, and other generation facilities. As well, regulation exists under the Ontario Energy Board, and planning and system management have since been consolidated under the Independent Electric System Operator.

That former Ontario PC government took some \$19.8 billion of Ontario Hydro debt and added an additional \$1 billion of debt it incurred buying spot power on the US market for as much as \$2.83 per kilowatt hour and then reselling it for 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in Ontario in the days when the outgoing PC government was also hauling emergency diesel generators into Ontario cities in

the event that the electrical system collapsed altogether. By the way, the electrical system did collapse altogether in August 2003.

For the past decade, Ontarians have rebuilt our province's transmission network and power generation plants at the same time as Ontario got out of coal-fired power generation. By comparison, our US neighbours have continued to run their wires, their nuclear reactors, their power dams and their coal plants into the ground.

Ontario has already taken a lot of the pain. The six dozen or so largest US utilities have not. They have yet to step up and look at a future rushing toward US residences and businesses, just like an express freight. In essence, Ontario has bought tomorrow's power system at yesterday's prices, financing it all at near-zero interest rates. Across the border, Americans will need to open their wallets to buy today's power system at tomorrow's prices, financing it all at interest rates that have nowhere to go but up.

Ontario's power rates are already lower than or competitive with rates in the fast-growing jurisdictions, such as the US eastern seaboard, the Great Lakes basin, the southwest or California. In those jurisdictions, just as here, the local utilities are turning off coal and moving toward a blend of natural gas, wind and solar, just like we did here, all the while looking at upgrading their wires and refurbishing their dams and their nuclear reactors—10 years behind Ontario.

1630

Now, after the end of this year, 2015, Ontarians can look forward to seeing the debt retirement charge cut off of their bill. What this means is that when you look at your bill and you see that one little line that says, "Debt retirement charge," after the end of this year—gone. At the same time, the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which took 10% off of your electricity bill, is going to be replaced with an income-tested means called the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It will benefit those who need assistance the most by flowing the funds through the Ontario Trillium Benefit along with your sales tax credit, your seniors' property tax credit and, in the north, your Ontario Northern Energy Tax Credit.

This bill will, if passed, mean that commercial, industrial and non-residential electricity users would stop paying the debt retirement charge nine months earlier than previously estimated and also give them time to make proper investment decisions. This would save a typical large industrial company about 7% on their energy bills; it would save a northern industrial company more than 8% and a small business about 4% on their electricity bills.

Speaker, this is a measure that, all by itself, brings with it a significant benefit to the province. While this is a bill with an awful lot of other little tweaks and measures, these energy benefits, all by themselves, are going to make a major difference here, and that's one solid reason that for those of us in western Mississauga, in our neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, this is a bill that we need and we should have

passed and enacted in between now and when the House rises for Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking our colleague the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for adding his voice in support of Bill 144, the important Budget Measures Act. As he mentioned, he and I are both sharing our time with the wonderful member from Burlington who will be speaking in just a moment.

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak today, here in my place, with respect to Bill 144. I say that not just as the Minister of Transportation, but, of course, also as someone who represents the community of Vaughan here in the Legislature, which, like many of the other communities from the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and beyond, is a fast-growing part of this province that has a wide variety of very pressing infrastructure needs.

This bill does speak to the importance of making sure that we continue to get it right with respect to investing, over not just the next year or decade, but, frankly, even beyond that point in time, the billions of dollars that are required for communities here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, like Vaughan, like Burlington, like Mississauga and others, and then, of course, Speaker, beyond the GTHA. We're also talking about communities from the north to the southwest to the east: I think of Kitchener-Waterloo; I think, of course, of Ottawa; I think of Thunder Bay; I think of Sarnia—every community in this province, 444 municipalities. I don't believe anybody here would disagree that in each of those communities, there is a significant and pressing need for infrastructure investments that range all the way from enhancing and building new public transit to extending and expanding roads and highways and improving bridges.

A very, very key and fundamental part not only of our government's agenda but of this specific legislation deals with the mechanisms that will help support the increased and expanded investments that are required, the additional resources that have to be deployed to make sure that we continue to see our quality of life across the province improved, but also to make sure that our economy continues to be prosperous.

Now, over the last number of days, we on this side of the Legislature—and unfortunately for those people watching at home, the opposition from both the Conservative and NDP caucuses—have had the chance to speak on issues relating to not only this bill, but our government's ambitious determination to move forward with investing in infrastructure. We've heard all kinds of wild and crazy accusations flowing from members on that side of the Legislature. It's unfortunate, because in each of their cases, for the most part, as I look at them on a day-after-day basis, I know the extent to which their communities, the communities they have been charged with representing here in this chamber, need additional support for infrastructure.

Of course, as opposition parties are often willing to do, they want to pick apart certain details. They want to

go after the finer minutiae in our plan. But what they neglect to tell people in this chamber, what they certainly neglect to tell media and what they neglect to tell people in their own communities is exactly how they would come forward and make the infrastructure investments that are required to improve our collective quality of life and to strengthen our province's economy.

It's unfortunate because for too long, I think, members of both the Conservative caucus and the NDP caucus have been far too focused on that level of granular detail, as opposed to saying, "Look, we tend to disagree, as we are required to do from time to time as opposition, but here is our alternative plan," and it's a plan that actually can be backed up with facts. It's a plan that can give people in communities as diverse as Kitchener-Waterloo and Hamilton, folks from Sudbury, folks from London—right across this province—some hope, some sense that the Conservatives and the NDP have a plan to build the province up.

Yet day after day, hour after hour, in debate after debate, opposition motions, questions asked in question period, and debate here on Bill 144, what the opposition does time and time again is make it clear that they have no plan, or at least that they have no plan for which the numbers add up.

It's all fine and dandy for members like the NDP finance critic, the member from Kitchener, to stand in their place and talk about whether or not we've delivered on a promise that had a 10-year horizon, about whether or not, in the first 14, 15 or 16 months of our mandate, we delivered on a promise that we always said would take a certain period of time.

She also stands in her place, among many others on that side of the House—in fact, like many others on both sides of the House—and says, "Show us proof. Show us proof, beyond commitments and media releases, that you're serious about this plan."

Speaker, I don't know how much clearer we could be with respect to our plan and demonstrating tangible results of our plan. I've said this before, in my place, in this House: Right across the province of Ontario, highways continue to be expanded and extended. Bridges and interchanges continue to be enhanced and reinvigorated.

Here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, it's impossible to miss. If you spend any time in the GTHA, or here in the city of Toronto, it's impossible to miss the Eglinton Crosstown LRT: 19 kilometres; 25 stops; three connections to GO stations, or at least to GO transit; multiple connections to the subway here in Toronto. It's a \$9.1-billion project that's currently being constructed, the single largest public transit project in Ontario history. Yet the members of both the NDP and the Conservative parties say, "Show us proof that it's real. Show us proof that you're actually building."

This list goes on. Right now, we are currently double-tracking, for example, the Barrie corridor of GO south of Rutherford station, from York University to Rutherford—another example of something that's physically required in order for us to deliver on two-way, all-day GO service.

So I don't know. I mean, it's really unclear to me. It's interesting, because the NDP talks about having a referendum on certain issues. In the last election campaign—which didn't take place four years ago or 10 years ago; it took place about 18 or 19 months ago—the people of Ontario had a chance to hold up to the light all three parties' plans for building the province up—all three of them. They had a chance to look at the Conservative plan. They had a chance to look at the NDP plan, such that it was. They had a chance to look at that plan. Of course, they had a chance to consider the plan that Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberals put forward, with specific details included for transit—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's fascinating for me to listen in particular to a member from Hamilton. Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I believe, is the name of the riding. That member himself knows full well that we are extending GO service not just to Hamilton but specifically to Stoney Creek, to a new station that will be built in his riding. I don't know, Speaker.

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At the same time, the leader of the NDP stands in her place—I know I sound like a broken record, and I apologize for that to those members. But day after day, the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, stands up and says, "You shouldn't be doing this." What she doesn't tell the people in her own caucus and in her own party, the rank and file of the NDP in communities all across the province of Ontario—she doesn't come forward and say, "Here's the project in your community that I wouldn't fund. Here's the project that I wouldn't build. Here's the project that I'd cancel."

I would expect that, as leader of her party, someone who aspires, I can only imagine, to one day be the Premier of Ontario, to one day have that opportunity—I believe there's a responsibility that flows to the leader of the NDP and to the members of her caucus from Kitchener, from London, from Hamilton, from all over the province, to level with the people here in this chamber: "We don't want to build infrastructure the way the Liberals are doing it. Therefore, we don't plan to build it. Here's what we're going to cancel." They won't say it; they should. It's unfortunate.

We're going to continue to build this province up. I look forward to my colleague from Burlington continuing with this debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to stand in my place today on behalf of the community of Burlington and join my colleague from Mississauga-Streetsville and, of course, the always eloquent Minister of Transportation.

It's indeed my honour to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. Our government is committed to building Ontario up. This is a commitment that we have repeatedly made to the people of Ontario by our words and by our actions in communities across our province and right here in this chamber.

Bill 144 implements necessary changes in order to continue our government's economic plan, including investing in the individuals in our communities, helping them to develop their skills, and making the largest investments in public infrastructure in Ontario, of which the Minister of Transportation spoke so eloquently a moment ago: over \$130 billion over the next decade, something that is greatly needed across our province, something that leading economists and business organizations have told us is critically important. Indeed, I've often heard the Minister of Transportation say—he said it when he came to my riding—that we are simultaneously playing catch-up and keep-up. I know that the people in Burlington appreciate these investments in transit infrastructure in particular. The day after our last budget, in fact, our mayor came to a breakfast and extolled the virtues of these investments. Our businesses have done so locally, and our citizens talk to me about it all the time. They're enormously grateful. Finally, we're strengthening retirement security so that Ontario's young people can live through their golden years with some financial stability because no one wants a generation of Ontarians retiring in poverty.

The proposed amendments to the Trillium Trust Act will ensure that net revenue gains from the sale of assets, like the broadened ownership of Hydro One, will be invested in priority infrastructure projects. These record investment levels have supported improved GO transit service. Major projects are under way—the regional express rail, the Lakeshore West and East corridors, and all-day, two-way 15-minute GO service between my community on the one end and Oshawa on the other; just extraordinary. Enhanced regional mobility will also include the Dundas rapid transit project linking Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville and my community of Burlington. Ongoing planning and design work will continue for this project, which is a big part of the next wave of Metrolinx's Big Move plan.

Of course, all citizens have a right to live in walk- and bicycle-friendly communities. Something of which I'm enormously proud is that our government is funding active transportation investments in communities right across this province because cycling and walking are incredibly important.

Interjection.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: That's right. It's critical not just to our liveability but, as my colleague mentions, to our health and well-being, to attracting jobs and investment to my community and to really giving our seniors the kind of robust transit and walking infrastructure that they need and deserve as they get older.

We are planning for the future beyond the next election cycle because that's leadership. I know that the people of Ontario understand this. They know that we need to do something for the future, that we need to do something for our young workforce of today to, again, ensure that they can retire not in poverty but in dignity. In fact, when the minister came to Burlington, we had a round table with businesses. Many of them said, "Wow,

we're getting to understand more and more every day the importance of the ORPP." They recognize that either we and they invest now in our population and in our citizens in the form of the ORPP or pay down the road when we have a whole generation of retirees with no retirement savings.

As we move into phase 2 of our mandate, our government is continuing to build Ontario up by making investments that create jobs, expand opportunity and secure prosperity for the people in Burlington and, indeed, right across our province. We recognize that infrastructure investments in the GTHA and beyond are critical, as I mentioned, not just to improving the quality of people's lives but to our business and our job creation.

A final point, if I may, Speaker, is something of which I'm terribly proud, and that's the investment in our Joseph Brant Hospital. We will have a brand new hospital by 2018 because of the investments that our government is making in the health and wellbeing of our citizens, particularly those in Burlington. This is creating jobs already and it will continue to attract jobs and investment to our community, and I'm enormously proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to stand up and give two-minute comments on what we just heard from the government side. I think it's great that they spoke for, basically, as long as their initial one-hour debate. It started with around 16 minutes, I think, as the first hour, followed by a 20-minute round afterwards. The concern is how quickly they are going to push this omnibus bill through the Legislature and probably time-allocate the debate and quickly put it through committee and bring it back and pass. That's quite a concern.

It's interesting. When the government wants things done they do it quickly. However, we're still waiting for our fall economic statement, which I believe is a few weeks behind. It would be nice to see where our finances are, because the Financial Accountability Officer just reported last week that it's not looking like this government is going to reach their balance by 2017-18, and particularly not from selling Hydro One. It might give them a little bump, but in the long term Ontario is going to be worse off.

I was glad to hear the Minister of Transportation speaking today about all the infrastructure projects. He's clearly listening to the farmers in my area who are continuing to talk about this Glanworth bridge going forward, the underpass which the ministry consultants want to take out. They talk about how strong infrastructure investment is in this province but I think infrastructure investment also includes rural Ontario and the farmers. They need their necessary infrastructure—their bridges, their roads—aside from the major arteries of our local communities, because the farm equipment is so large nowadays and the trucks on and off the road are so numerous.

The agricultural sector, I think, is our number one industry in this province. It's consistent, it provides plenty of jobs and it helps local, small, rural communities stay afloat. This government needs to ensure that when they're making decisions out of Toronto, that the local needs are met.

A group of farmers and I are fighting to stop this government from getting rid of a major underpass for Highway 401 for our farmers. We hope the government is going to listen. We have slowed them down in the decision-making and we hope that in the next little while we'll hear some good news that they are supporting rural Ontario and the agricultural community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm just going to go right to the point from the Minister of Transportation. He says that we're just opposing. We're just trying to get this government to follow through on what they said. Perhaps it's unfair to say that the former Minister of Transportation—you know, I should hold this Minister of Transportation to account for what Mr. Murray had said. He did say, for the record, on May 26, 2014, when speaking with CBC Radio, that Kitchener will see "GO train service that runs every 15 minutes between Waterloo region and Toronto ... within five years." This was a direct quote. This was said just prior to the election. And then there was also the environmental assessment and the scandal associated with that, and then the bullet train and what have you.

But what I really want to say, though, is that I share the concerns of the member from Kitchener Centre when she says that that train is not fast enough, because adding slow trains doesn't solve the issue. What the Minister of Transportation did not address is the false choice that Bill 144 puts before us. As an omnibus budget measures act, it contains, really, the first clues so far disclosed as to how the government intends to fill the hole it has created with that, and then the bullet train and what have you.

This is actually coming from Tom Adams's blog:

"What all of this means," he goes on to say, "is that [the Premier's] signature initiative to use the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to build transit is to be achieved in part through the farcical finance of seizing revenue from another level of government. The amount of money is small in the scheme of things but it illustrates the government's reliance on astrology and unicorn sightings to guide their electricity and transit plans." I have to bring this to the floor of the Legislature because it is a false choice. You cannot say to the people of this province, "If we don't sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure." That makes no sense whatsoever.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today, following the excellent overview of Bill 144 provided by our members: the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, the Minister of Transportation and the member for Burlington.

The Minister of Transportation gave us a broad overview of all the quite wonderful investment we are

making in public infrastructure: projects such as roads and bridges and transit. In particular, we're already seeing the effects of these investments in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. The new GO train station in Gormley is going to extend the Richmond Hill line up to that community in northern Richmond Hill. People are eagerly awaiting the opening of that station next year.

The frequency of GO regional rail express on the Barrie line will benefit my residents in King township. They're eagerly looking forward to the increased frequency that will make their commute so much easier. We also have many improvements to the Stouffville line. People accessing the train, whether it be from Mount Joy, Markham, Stouffville or Lincolnville—four stations in my riding along the Stouffville line—are going to benefit tremendously from the increase in the frequency of those trains.

As you'll know, Mr. Speaker, my riding is also quite rural in many parts, and so I was particularly pleased to see some of the measures to improve and streamline the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario: very important to residents in King township and in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. I was really pleased to see that this bill will authorize the Minister of Finance to establish a grant program to support live horse racing in Ontario, administered on the minister's behalf by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. This is, indeed, excellent news. We need to continue to build Ontario up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We've been listening to debate this afternoon and so many proposals from members opposite—the wish lists they see within this budget measures legislation. I find it very difficult, as opposition, to get the data as far as making appropriate decisions on what is being proposed here. Much of it is on the spending side of the ledger. We hear so much about infrastructure spending, and we recognize that subways are important. We don't have any subways down in my riding. In fact, we really don't have any public transit at all in my riding.

But my concern is that so much of this debate is being presented—these ideas are being presented—in a vacuum. We have not received the fall economic statement; it's something like 11 days late. I heard very little mention from the members opposite of their budget of last spring, the 2015 budget, and virtually no mention at all about Ontario's \$300-billion debt, which is now the equivalent of 40% of Ontario's gross domestic product. We have to think about that debt. We have to think about ongoing deficits, which invariably occur with the level of spending we are seeing opposite.

This government continues to maintain that they will balance the books in three years. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer has indicated that they're going to come up short by about \$3.5 billion. But like us, he's unable to get the figures from these people as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments.

One of the government members can reply. I recognize the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank and acknowledge my colleagues from Elgin—Middlesex—London, Kitchener—Waterloo, Oak Ridges—Markham and Haldimand—Norfolk for all their comments.

Speaker, to some of their comments: Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that set a clear, definable path back to a balanced budget right at the very bottom of the recession in the fall of 2009 and never once deviated from that deficit reduction path. In fact, in budget after budget, Ontario not only met its deficit reduction targets every year but it substantially exceeded its deficit reduction targets every single year. No other government in Canada—not the Harper federal government, not the Alberta PC government and not the British Columbia Liberal government—has been able to replicate that feat. Ontario is the only one to have set and met its deficit reduction targets.

This, of course, is very much congruent with our exercise when we first came into government to find, just like the federal government has found, that the balance was actually more than \$5 billion short—\$5.6 billion in Ontario's case. Ontario didn't complain about it, but we set about deficit reduction, achieved a balanced budget a year ahead of schedule and then ran, prior to the onset of the recession, three consecutive budget surpluses, which enabled this province to pay down long-term debt and to finance infrastructure.

Much like the member for Kitchener—Waterloo has talked about—I don't know whether she feels she can influence the railways, CP and CN—the need to upgrade the track bed and the bridges so that those trains can travel as fast as she described is really a key need. I know that my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham talked about her own growth challenges too—thank you very much, Speaker; I'm out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes; thank you. I'll now ask for further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As I indicated just recently, I think it is very important to continue the discussion of this Budget Measures Act in the context of the very recent report from Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer. The reason I say that is because, other than going back to the budget of last spring, economic and fiscal situations have changed fairly significantly at both the provincial and federal level—even the global level since last spring. So we really don't have much choice because the budget bill, for whatever reason, has been introduced before the fall economic statement. We don't have the up-to-date economic and fiscal numbers from this government.

Financial Accountability Officer Stephen LeClair has projected a \$3.5-billion deficit—in spite of what I've been hearing this afternoon from government members—in fiscal year 2017–18. I attended his media studio presentation a week or so ago, and he posed a question to the media present. As he said, why would the average person in Ontario care that, three years from now, there's going

to be another \$3.5 billion added to the debt, coming from Mr. LeClair's figures? He recognized and acknowledged that he had been given short shrift on getting data from this government. So he asked the question: Why would the average Ontarian care? Then he reminded all of us present that, during the last election, a promise was made by this present government to balance the books by 2017–18.

As opposition leader Patrick Brown explained—this was in an interview he did with the Toronto Star—referring to the members opposite, “They've backed themselves into a corner. They have no way out other than to raise taxes or cut services,” in spite of what we've been hearing in debate this afternoon, adding, “They want to cut funding to doctors, close needed schools and raise hydro rates, all because of their incompetence.” Those three areas—health, education and electricity—are certainly part of the budget measures, as it was recently described, omnibus legislation.

1700

We are surprised that this government has not brought forward its fall economic statement. Therefore, we rely on the numbers from the Financial Accountability Officer. As Mr. LeClair explained: “Over the period from 2010–11 to 2014–15, Ontario reduced the deficit by an average of \$0.9 billion per year. To achieve balance in 2017–18, the government plans to reduce the deficit by an average of \$3.4 billion per year, a rate of improvement nearly four times greater than the pace of the past four years.” I don't have my hopes up. I think the Financial Accountability Officer was suggesting this isn't going to happen.

Last Friday, we received an economic statement from the federal government, to their credit. Let's do a bit of a comparison. As we know, the federal Liberal Party was elected on October 19 on a pledge to deliver \$10 billion in deficit spending—and this is a familiar phrase—on infrastructure projects over three years before bringing the federal government's budget back into a balanced position in the fourth year—so, again, more stimulus spending. Obviously, we see a bit of a partnership between these two levels of government.

Also just last Friday, the federal finance department projected a budget deficit of \$3 billion in fiscal 2015–16. This is a big swing from the \$2.4-billion surplus forecast by the previous Conservative government. That's about a \$6-billion discrepancy there. I will say, Speaker, and you will remember, we've seen this film before. Liberals come in—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's right.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I hear people agreeing.

Liberals come in with big spending plans—I've been hearing this all afternoon—and they claim that—it happened with the previous Conservative government—essentially, they've cooked the books and left the cupboards bare. Not only the Liberals say this. I recall 25 years ago, NDP member Bob Rae basically saying the same thing about the David Peterson Liberals, of all political parties. Bob Rae blamed David Peterson—

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I hear a bit of feedback from across the way.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We're still hearing about Bob Rae.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Bob Rae, the Liberal—Bob Rae, the NDP at the time, of course—blamed David Peterson for spending all the money that the NDP wanted to spend. I remember 25 years ago, I had a young family. I wasn't too involved in politics at the time, but I just imagined the NDP forming government, getting into the finance ministry building, running down the hall to the safe, and it was empty. That was the perception I had 25 years ago. We've seen this film before.

What does a new government do in a situation like that or a situation that they feel they're in? What do Liberals invariably do? They run up the debt. They continue to run deficits. They're public about it—very public; both federally and provincially, we're going to see another three years of deficits—and they spend money they don't have.

I just want to set the stage for the discussion with respect to the wish lists that are being presented opposite during debate on this budget measures bill. Fiscal year 2016-17: The deficit is now expected to grow to \$3.9 billion—this is federal—compared to a surplus of \$2.7 billion in the April budget. Go figure.

One other thing that I do want to stress—Speaker, you were here; I was here—the Financial Accountability Officer points this out in his report: “Growth in Ontario’s economy has slowed markedly since the robust expansion” of a number of years ago. That robust expansion—he gives the years—coincided with the Mike Harris government.

“Over the period from 1995 to 2000”—this is from our Financial Accountability Officer—“the average annual growth rate of real GDP was 4.6%.” Compare that to the past eight years. Ontario’s real economic growth has averaged just 1.2% a year.

So I ask all present, as you make your pitch for subways and infrastructure spending, spending in your own ridings—we’re not that long out of the election, and I know it’s important to buy votes across the way, but we just have to make these kinds of commitments and statements in the context that, back under Mike Harris, we had a rate of economic growth of 4.6% a year; over the last eight years, we’ve had a rate of growth of 1.2% under the McGuinty-Wynne government.

These are the numbers. In my view, the numbers don’t lie—in this case, because they’re coming from Mr. LeClair, the Ontario government-appointed Financial Accountability Officer.

He goes on: Between fiscal year 2007-08 and fiscal year 2009-10, personal income tax revenue in Ontario dropped 8.1%. That’s not a good sign. And get this: Corporate tax revenue in the province of Ontario dropped by over 50%. We all think of those lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

Mr. LeClair points out that at the same time, Ontario’s program spending—the kind of things we’re hearing in

this Budget Measures Act—increased sharply by \$11.5 billion in 2009-10 from the previous year. That’s a pretty big increase. That’s heading close to \$12 billion—largely as a result of stimulus spending on shovel-ready infrastructure.

And what do we hear today from Premier Wynne and the members opposite? When in doubt, spend again. Ramp up the infrastructure spending, the stimulus spending, the kind of spending we’re hearing about on subways, the kind of spending that encourages other levels of government, certainly at the municipal level, to dust off that old project that didn’t make sense 10 years ago. “Here comes the money”—lots of work for staff at the federal, provincial and Ontario level. It gives MPPs something to do: to come out and attend a ceremony and cut a ribbon.

I have always questioned this concept of spending your way to prosperity. This was proven not to work under the Bob Rae government. You cannot spend your way to prosperity. We saw it with this government five years ago, with stimulus spending that didn’t work. We saw it with Bob Rae. That was 25 years ago. It didn’t work, back in the day, with Bob Rae. What you end up doing is you spend your way into a hole of debt. How do you get out of that hole? Stop spending. Granted, it certainly may have created a lot of government jobs. It did pave a few roads. I know some arenas were constructed. But it really had no lasting effect, in my opinion, on Ontario’s unemployment rate. Granted, it does buy a few votes for government members who have the wherewithal to show up with these cheques.

Here we go again with the federal government. Just last Friday, we heard, “Canadians have given our government a strong mandate”—I think I just heard that this afternoon, at the provincial level—to take a new approach to securing our prosperity.” This gets back to the magical, whimsical secret to prosperity. I’m quoting Bill Morneau, the federal finance minister. He says, “I intend to use the fiscal and budgetary tools at my disposal to do just that....

“We must also invest”—code word for “spend,” obviously—in our economy, our communities, and in Canadians themselves. That includes transformative—who wrote this speech? This sounds so familiar from what I’ve been hearing in the last couple of budgets. “That includes”—here it comes—“transformative investments in infrastructure and a new plan for a strong middle class.” That’s quite a ring to it. I think we’ve heard this before.

1710

Obviously, Ottawa is going to press ahead with stimulus spending in a weak economy. It’s already pushing the budget further into debt; they promised to balance in four years. The federal plan—again, we read this in the media this Friday—is going to focus on transportation; fighting climate change—I see some similarity here; adding new housing units—I don’t know whether he’s heard what this government plans to do with the taxation.

Morneau did an interview in Turkey quite recently. I’ll quote him again: “The campaign commitment around

infrastructure spending was a very important part of our commitment, and we will be moving forward”—moving forward, that’s a good phrase—“on that commitment in a fashion that will ensure that we find the right projects”—that goes back to the shovel-ready, trying to find some project that somebody put together maybe five years ago that never saw the light of day—to make a real difference for the Canadian economy.”

So find those right projects, dust off those proposals. Our municipal partners are probably going to get, I don’t know, maybe a few weeks’ notice. They’re going to have to scramble. Hopefully, those municipalities that like to spend money on projects they would never fund themselves—I hope they have some projects ready so they don’t miss the boat when the big money starts to flow.

Going back to the Financial Accountability Officer’s report, as he states, “Ontario’s economic growth over the past eight years has been largely driven by household spending, residential investment”—you don’t want to tax that, by the way—and government expenditures,” not driven by auto, not driven by steel or mining or forestry or agriculture. He goes on to report, “On average, net trade and business investment have been a drag on overall economic growth since 2007.” This is in Ontario.

“In 2000”—I was an MPP back then under Mike Harris—“Ontario merchandise exports to the US represented 9.8% of total US imports. By 2014, Ontario’s share”—here we come—“had dropped to just 5.5%.” Again, the numbers don’t lie. This was presented by Mr. LeClair.

I really feel it’s important to recognize that in any analysis, any debate on this Budget Measures Act, we have to be cognizant of the long-term unemployment problem that has worsened in the province of Ontario compared to even before the recession. It remains at 19%, long-term unemployment. These are people who may never work again. It’s six percentage points higher than prior to the recession, and we know for the long-term unemployed, it really does damage to their long-term future, essentially.

How did all this Liberal taxing and spending affect employment? Well, under McGuinty—a big spender during the good times that had been created previously by the Mike Harris regime—the unemployment rate stayed static from 2003-08, after which it rose to 9% in 2009. It kind of drifted back to 7.8% in 2012. We’re now sitting at a 7.3% unemployment rate. Mr. McGuinty’s predecessor, a Premier named Harris, cut income taxes by 30% and saw unemployment drop from 8.7% in 1995 to 5.8% in 2000, inched up a bit to 6.9% in 2003.

Fast-forward to this year—and it is hard to get up-to-date data because we had the budget, but we don’t have any fall economic statement. January to May—I think this is important when we’re talking about government spending across the way—the average wage settlement of 1.5% for Ontario’s broader public sector employees is the highest increase in four years. I don’t know whether this is going to be a continuing trend. We’ve all witnessed the teacher negotiations. We saw the money changing hands,

but we haven’t been given the real costs of those deals that were struck.

Then we questioned where the spending is on priorities like health and education. Health care spending is limited to 1.7% a year, well below the 3% that we have seen in past years with this present government. This partly explains the measures to cut physician fees and the move towards activity-based hospital funding. It’s important for all of us to continue to talk to doctors and hospitals in our areas about this.

Education spending is projected to grow by less than half the base of the past four years. Good luck with that one; we’ll see how that works out. How will they accomplish that? Well, closing schools, for one; that’s one way to cut spending in the education sector. Obviously, it’s not by finding savings and not achieving this net zero that we hear about, by finding savings in compensation, salaries and benefits.

I’ll just wrap up. I think I mentioned this in my two-minute presentation: Ontario has a \$300-billion debt. It’s now sitting at 40% of our gross domestic product. Let’s listen to what Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s have to say about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It’s a pleasure to get a couple of minutes to talk about this great big bill. I have to tell you, I haven’t read it entirely, because it would probably take two months to actually get through this entire bill. I find it interesting that a bill like this gets tabled and then we’re into debate immediately, when in many other times when there are issues before this House, we get the bill and then we never hear about the bill or get to debate the bill for months on end.

This bill is an omnibus bill that has some poison pills in it. The Liberals are getting very good at actually putting poison pills in their bill. They use it as a wedge issue so that later on, when we go into election mode in a year or two, they’ll be able to say, “Well, you know, the NDP voted against this bill. It could have been there for their constituents” or “The PCs voted against this bill” or “They supported this bill. Why are they trying to say something different now?”

There is one particular poison pill in this bill that we’ve dealt with before, back in 2012-13. It was when the member from—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —Lambton county had a private member’s bill, which was actually going to try and achieve what the government’s going to achieve here now. The government agreed to put this into a programming motion, because at the time they didn’t have the guts to actually bring the legislation forward, because we were in a minority government. Then, at the end of the day, when we voted on the programming motion, every Liberal in House, with the exception of the Minister of Transportation and former member Mrs. Cansfield, voted against the bill.

So we find it here now and we wonder why we find it here. But I'm going to have 20 minutes to talk about that, probably later this week; I just look forward to refreshing everyone's memory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to speak for a moment or two on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. I think it's worth putting this in context. It's actually very common that when we have the budget each year that there's a spring budget bill, which is some immediate amendments to legislation that are required to implement the budget, and then a second one in the fall. This is essentially the fall budget bill.

It does have a number of issues it covers. For example, people will recall from the budget last spring that we were going to make changes to support the sale of beer in grocery stores. This is actually the act in which those amendments to the Liquor Control Act, to allow sales of beer in grocery stores, are taking place.

1720

There have been lots of discussions. I'm sure that in your constit office, just like mine, one of those frequently asked questions is, "When are you going to get rid of the debt retirement charge on people's electricity bills?" The debt retirement charge is being removed from residential electricity users' bills beginning January 1, 2016.

What this act does is propose to end the debt retirement charge for all electricity users by April 1, 2018, which means we're rolling forward the date on which the debt retirement charge would end for commercial, industrial and other non-residential users.

There are amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act.

I note again the racetrack that we share, Speaker—one of the questions I often hear is, "When are you going to bring together the Ontario Racing Commission and the OLG?" Again, the legislation is in here to allow that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise for a couple of minutes to add my comments to this debate on Bill 144 and to follow my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk, Mr. Barrett. It's always great to listen to the member from Haldimand—Norfolk. He's my kind of Conservative, a fiscal conservative who obviously advocates to stop the tax-and-spending ways that we're seeing on behalf of this government.

The member from Haldimand—Norfolk talked about the \$300-billion debt we have in Ontario. That's 40% of GDP, and that is an alarming figure.

Of course, he talked about unemployment in the province. We have over half a million people unemployed in the province today. Those people are waking up every morning and they don't have a lot of hope for the future, unfortunately. We continue to see this government bringing forward legislation, but none of the legislation is actually an economic action plan, an economic plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario, let alone balancing the budget.

One thing I'd like to get on the record, Mr. Speaker—I asked a question in question period last week, but I think this is something that this government needs to talk about, and that is the expansion at the Billy Bishop airport.

We learned today that with the federal Liberal government's decision not to expand at Billy Bishop, that's going to cost one of Ontario's factories a lot of jobs, and that's Bombardier. They're going to lose a \$2-billion order there. If this government would only advocate to the federal government and stand up for Ontario, stand up for Ontario's workers, and urge Prime Minister Trudeau to allow this expansion to go ahead, it will create 2,000 jobs. It will create \$250 million in economic impact to the city of Toronto alone, every single year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Haldimand—Norfolk really focused on the economic impact of some of the fallout from this bill, and that, of course, embraces this philosophy that you have to sell off Hydro One in order to get infrastructure, which we know is a false choice. I just want to comment on that piece.

The hydro privatization experiment has failed in Ontario already. In fact, there is not one jurisdiction anywhere in the world where privatization hasn't resulted in big rate hikes. The promise of deregulation was lower rates. The promise of smart meters was that smart meters will save you money. Both promises were completely false. That needs to get on the record.

A business in Waterloo region—just to support the member from Haldimand—Norfolk—wrote to me. This is from the Brick Brewing Co. This is from the president, George Croft. He says, "This is to inform you of the situation much higher than anticipated energy rates has created for my company."

"We were yesterday advised that a 20% increase in our electrical costs would be effective as of May 1, 2014. This represents a total increase of \$75,000 for our three facilities...."

"We will also see our natural gas costs increase by 12% over the same period...."

"I am writing because it is becoming impossible to reconcile the Ontario government's very public platform of job creation with the barriers to growth that our business seems to far too frequently suffer."

"We are the largest Canadian-owned brewery in Ontario yet regulations strangely favour global brewing conglomerates, subsidies serve to keep small brewers small" and now they have the high electricity rates to contend with.

"Ontario is becoming unkind to commerce. I'm writing in the hopes that you might begin to act quickly and definitively to avoid a slow diminishing of the industrial heart of our provincial economy."

That goes back to energy prices. That goes back to the sell-off of Hydro One and the privatization and carving away that resource. Energy rates are going to go up, and the economy will suffer because of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. I certainly appreciate the feedback. It contributes to what we've been discussing this afternoon. I know that much of the discussion across the way has been about spending. We do have to point out that when you've got a \$300-billion debt, there's a spending item right there: interest on that debt. That's—what?—something like \$10 billion a year. It was just mentioned that if we had a ministry of interest, it would be the third largest after spending on health, which is a priority, and spending on education, which is a priority.

What I find lacking—granted, there's no fall economic statement, and things have changed. It seems that this year's budget is becoming ancient history. I'm not hearing of a specific plan on how to accomplish this wish list. Some people feel there are some important things in this Budget Measures Act about getting beer into grocery stores, but when you have a debt level that's 40% of the gross domestic product, that's more money in interest than we spend on community and social services to help those in our society who are less fortunate.

That's a priority in our society. That's the nature of our society, and I didn't hear any discussion about that. Sure, beer in grocery stores is fine, or more surveillance on illegal tobacco to try to deal with the failures of the past. But you've got to get the numbers straight. You've got to look at the real world if you want to achieve this wish list that is being presented this afternoon. You never did have a revenue problem; you had a spending problem. Now you've got a spending and a revenue problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Applause.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Gosh, what a warm welcome. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's so rare.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is very rare.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The opposition is united.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Someone just made a comment from the Conservatives that this side of the House is united on one particular issue, which is not selling off Hydro One, which is kind of unusual because we're different political animals. To see eye to eye on something so basic—you would think this government would come around to common sense and reasonableness when it comes to not selling off an asset that's actually a revenue-generating tool that we use.

Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity. I'm always proud to stand in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents in London–Fanshawe. I rise today to speak on Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo for sharing her thoughts on this bill. She is probably one of the most interesting debaters, I think, in this House. I love how she incorporates real-life stories about her daughter, Claire, and the word problem-solving math we all used to do that was kind of frustrating. So

it's always very good to hear from our finance critic. She's very thoughtful and she always likes to make sure that we follow the money.

When you talk about things that don't add up, this side of the House, the Liberal government, gets riled up, because the numbers don't add up. Even when the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about the numbers and gave out specifics, you heard a lot of chatter from that side of the House, from the government side, because they don't like to admit their numbers don't add up.

1730

Part of the reason we're talking about numbers—that we need to have this information—is because they're not transparent on this deal. They're not transparent in many ways, and I'll give you some examples.

First, there were no consultations within the public realm. They didn't travel this Hydro One idea. They didn't ask the public. They didn't do it. That's the first problem. The other situation: they didn't anticipate that their own person—the government refused to co-operate with the Financial Accountability Officer. The FAO could not get a copy of Ed Clark's analysis of the sale, even though a guiding principle of the Ed Clark panel was that the decision process remain transparent, professional and independently validated. You have to ask yourself what this government is afraid of that they don't put out the numbers, open up the process and consult with the public. So we have to ask what is happening on that side of the House.

It does kind of surprise me a little bit that members are standing up and actually talking about the positive results of selling Hydro One. How ironic is that? How ironic is it that you're talking about selling a public asset that brings us revenue to help support our public services and, "We think that's okay because we're going to own 40%. That makes it all okay, because we're not selling it all. We're better than the Harris government, because they sold off the 407, but we're only selling 60%. We're keeping 40%, so that makes it all okay." Not okay. Sorry, Liberal government. It's not okay to keep 40% and say it's still in public hands. It's not in public hands. One hundred percent ownership, public sector, is what we call public ownership and public accountability and the public owning it—each individual constituent owning that. Forty percent is not ownership in the public hands.

The other thing: I was disappointed today; I was actually kind of deflated. I was gearing up to listen to the Minister of Finance, because we've been building this up—you've been building this up. This government has been building up Hydro One, and what a great deal this is. We are so not seeing the future by not selling Hydro One for infrastructure: That's what you've been telling us. In question period, we've been saying to you that it's not a good idea.

We've now gone through the committee process in estimates. We've done all the work, all that information back and forth. We get the bill, this bill right here—I can hold this up; I assume it's not a prop if I hold the bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Is it a prop?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the question. Generally speaking, if you want to refer to the bill, that's okay. But if you're holding it up to make a big point, that's probably not good.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think I'll hold it down here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Really, after the estimates, this is what comes out of the discussions, right? All the ministries come and present. Our wonderful finance critic here questions you up and down and makes sure we get the numbers correct. Through all that discussion, we find out that you're not going to reap the benefits of selling Hydro One for \$4 billion, as you've been telling us. The reality is that it's going to raise \$1.4 billion in net cash for infrastructure.

So, after the estimates situation, the ministries coming forward, everybody being questioned on their budgets, this is the bill we get. This is the bill we get, and then we come back to the House and debate it. I am sitting on the edge of my seat with anticipation to hear the explanation from this Minister of Finance why this is such a good deal. Convince me. Sell it.

What do we get, Speaker? We get him talking for six minutes—actually, it was five minutes and 16 seconds; I timed it. The table can correct me, and I can always correct my record, but I think it was five minutes and 16 seconds. It'll be interesting to know if I'm right. That's all he had. Really? That's all you've got when you're selling one of the biggest public assets in Ontario and nobody agrees with you? The Conservatives don't agree with you, the NDP doesn't agree with you and the public doesn't agree with you, 83% don't agree with you selling off hydro, and the guy who's leading the charge—well, the Premier too; I mean, let's face it, they're a tag team there, leading the charge. He's got the opportunity to tell us all about it and what a great buy-in. We should have buy-in for this, because we're all going to get infrastructure out of this deal—no.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Even the chamber doesn't agree.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No, even the chamber of commerce. That's right. I'm so glad my colleague from Welland mentioned that. The chamber of commerce is telling you—very good point. I wrote some notes earlier when he was speaking. He actually talked about how they're helping business. The chamber of commerce tells you it's not helping. It's going to hurt business. It's going to hurt business and we're going to lose jobs, Speaker.

Back to the debate: That was a let-down, Speaker. He's going to share his time with his wonderful colleague from York South—

Ms. Catherine Fife: York South-Weston.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: York South-Weston? That's all? I thought there were three.

She is a great member. I really enjoy working across the way from the member. But I do have to be honest: You let me down. You didn't debate for the whole hour. The minister went five minutes and 16 seconds, and the

member from York South-Weston went about, oh, a total of 16, so about 11 minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: She did more—14.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: She did more? Sorry, 14.

I was kind of hoping I could get a little more out of that debate in order to give you some feedback, but there was none. There wasn't a lot going on in that debate from the government. That fell flat.

The member from Nipissing's rendition of this debate, for an hour, was extremely informative. You guys should have listened to it on the parliamentary channel, because he talked about the Trillium Trust and he talked about how the Trillium Trust needs to have transparency so the people of Ontario have trust in what's going on. This government really needs to rebuild trust for the people of Ontario. Nobody trusts the sale of Hydro One—83%.

I was knocking on doors this weekend. It was the first snowfall in London. The flakes were huge. It was the best packing snow you could ever have for the first snowfall. I went out and I was knocking on doors, and I came to this first door—nice man—and I asked him, "Would you sign my petition for stopping the sale of Hydro One?" And do you know what he said, Speaker? He said, "Oh, what's the point? This government is going to do what they want anyway. It's already in progress."

People are discouraged. They don't want Hydro One being sold off, but you know what? They feel like it doesn't matter. This is a majority government. They're not going to listen to anybody. It's a big problem if you are a majority government and your ears have been turned off because, regardless if you are a majority or minority government, you have an obligation. You have an obligation to people in your riding; you have an obligation to people in this province to instill feelings or a passion about government, that they feel engaged in what you're doing.

When I was elected in 2011, it was a minority government, and people were excited about government because they felt they had a voice. In this majority government, people feel like you're shutting them out, shutting them off, shutting them down. But that isn't going to stop us on this side, Speaker, because that is our job. Our job is to tell you what people are saying back in our ridings. It's a terrible shame that they don't listen. Arrogance runs supreme, and you know what's happening is that they're getting rewarded by getting re-elected.

It's not because you're doing a good job. I mean, yes, there are some things—yes, okay, you're not all bad. I have to say there are some things you're doing well. You can always do better. But I don't think people rewarded you this time with a majority government because you did a good job last government. I was experiencing what happened, and what I was experiencing, and a lot of the other members on this side of the House, is that you had the Ornge scandal. That Ornge scandal really, Speaker—people's lives were at stake.

1740

Oh, the chemotherapy scandal. Sometimes we think about scandals and we think about the money, right? But

the chemotherapy scandal—that was life and death. That was a complete lack of oversight and mismanagement. That's the highest cost with this government as far as I'm concerned.

So you've got the chemotherapy, you had Ornge, you had the gas plants, and that ticket item, of course, skyrocketed, yet it doesn't look like anybody cares over there. You know, "We got elected again, so we can just keep doing what we did before." No. Hydro One is the wrong decision to make in this government, in this time, ever. There's no excuse for selling a public asset.

Scandal after scandal and then—and I don't want to offend the member from Sudbury but I do have to mention it—we had that big by-election, and to have that happening as well does not bode well.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again, clapping because someone gets elected doesn't mean it's a success. Success is defined in many different ways. Success is not winning a seat. Success is about how you treat people. That's success.

Success can also be defined as how you treat other people you work with. In a minority government, we had a lot of respect. We had some kind of leverage around here. I can see the two members here from Welland and Kitchener-Waterloo saying, "Right on. We did. We were listened to. We negotiated things into the budget. We negotiated the Financial Accountability Office." So that was great.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: And that was success for you, too.

So success can be when you actually work with people across the way and listen to what they have to say. It's not always about being elected and saying, "I won." How did you win? How did you get there? You know when you play basketball or baseball or some sport activity and the winning team says, "We won. Right on." And they had fouls, they actually hurt somebody on the field because they twisted their ankle because someone pushed them out of the way, but they won the game. Do you want to win that way? I guess if you do, that's your prerogative. That's who you are. You're okay with winning at any cost.

You're not winning when you sell Hydro One. Don't do that at any cost. Next time, when there's another election, if you all win again—if that's what you think, that you've done your job, that's not always the case. There are a lot of political angles at play when there's an election. It's whoever your leader is at the time. It's the policy and platforms you make. It's whether or not you did good casework on the ground. Have you met your constituents? Have you spoken out about issues they care about?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Have you knocked on doors?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, that's right: Have you knocked on doors? So there are a lot of ingredients that go into this recipe of success. And then sometimes you just kind of ride the coattails of the wave, kind of

like what happened in the federal government. You ride that wave of coattails of whatever party.

Success is not about winning. Success is about the job that you do for the people you represent and how you affect their lives. Measure success that way. Because if you measure success that way, you won't sell Hydro One. You'll stop dead in your tracks, you'll put the brakes on, and you'll say, "You know what? That Teresa Armstrong, she made some sense today. She was talking about how people feel and what success means and how I do my job, and it's not always just about cutthroat numbers."

I know when we talked about numbers, you all got riled up. But when we were talking about doing the right thing, that doesn't always mean power and profits. Those things will come if you do the right thing. Hydro One already gives you a profit. It gives you revenue. So there you go; you don't have a reason to sell it. If you do the right thing, that just rolls out onto paper. You've got a profit.

When I was elected in 2011, I wasn't sitting here going, "Well, the people told me they wanted me, so I've done whatever I"—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, exactly. I heard one of the members—I think it was Mr. Fedeli there from Nipissing—talking about how awful this is, and that he brought forward the numbers on the gas plants when the previous Premier Dalton McGuinty said that it was only \$40 million; that's all it cost to cancel these contracts. And he was saying, "No, no, no. I had evidence. I had proof." He's also saying this now. We've been talking about it, too. Really, we led the charge; the NDP leads the charge when it comes to not selling public assets. But today, he just happened to be talking about it in his debate for an hour. It was really well received. You should really hear it again. He was talking about, "Don't do this because the numbers don't add up, the numbers aren't correct."

The House leader was saying, "Well, that's not what the mandate of the people told me," and the member from Barrie was saying something, and the House leader said, "Well, she got elected. They elected me." It's not success. Success is not about an election; success is the job that you do at the end of the day, when you can close your door at home, put your head on your pillow and say, "You know what? I did the right thing for the people of Ontario."

Some 83% of the people do not want you to sell off hydro. The chamber of commerce does not want you to sell off hydro. The Conservatives—the Conservatives—don't want you to sell off hydro. Now, they could be doing something political—we don't know—but they don't want you to sell off hydro.

Now, you know where we're coming from. You know what the NDP talks about: "Don't sell your public assets." So you know that.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What did they say?

Ms. Cindy Forster: That you're taking drugs.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Pardon me? I'd love to know who said that because, later on, I'd like to have a respectful conversation with you about that comment being completely inappropriate in this House. You need to show professional respect for everybody, and if you want to say something like that—and I'm not saying who it was—you need to say it up front and you need to own it. And you need to own the sale of Hydro One, because I hope that, in the next election, the people of Ontario will hold you accountable. The comment you just made, I think all of you making that decision—that's the appropriate flip of what you're doing. You're not thinking straight when you sell Hydro One. You're not.

Don't sell Hydro One. You know what? If nothing else, take Hydro One out of this budget and let's debate it in a proper forum.

So, Speaker, I want to thank you for the time that I had today to speak about this budget bill, and I do appreciate everyone listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank my colleague from London—Fanshawe for her 20-minute debate, which I listened to attentively.

There were a few things that I'd like to highlight from her presentation: Not once did they offer any suggestions on what they would do. All they did was just talk about Hydro One or something—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Where's the plan? What's the plan?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: There's nothing there talking about a plan on what they would do to help Ontarians. What we're doing on this side—and that was the question she asked earlier, about five minutes in: What is happening on this side of the House? Well, I can tell you what is happening on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in Ontario. We're building Ontario up.

I can tell you that just with northern Ontario, for example, just a couple of weeks ago, \$69 million was invested in northern infrastructure on highways, in ridings of members from that party. Timiskaming—Cochrane, Timmins—all of these areas are getting investment from this government because we see the importance of investing in Ontario. There is \$14 million in Sudbury for the television and film industry. I know I don't have enough time to talk about all the great investments that are happening in Sudbury, that are happening in north-eastern Ontario and northern Ontario and throughout the province.

It is this budget, it is this economic statement that we are so proud of because we are building Ontario up, creating jobs and making sure that this is the best province not only—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Hundreds of jobs; thousands and thousands of jobs.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Hundreds of thousands of jobs, as my colleague is mentioning. We're doing a great job of that, and I'm very proud of this statement and I'm very proud of this government.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just wanted to commend the member from London—Fanshawe. I thought she delivered an excellent 20-minute speech and added a lot to this debate. I think, quite frankly, she brought what she's hearing in her riding of London—Fanshawe to this House and brought those concerns to the government.

I know that I'm hearing the exact same things from my constituents. They're deeply concerned about the sale of Hydro One, but more importantly, they're deeply concerned about how this government manages taxpayer dollars. They have no respect for taxpayers across the province. They've been in power now for 12 years, and quite frankly, things are getting worse. I feel that they're expediting the hole that they're digging this province in.

Quite frankly, the legacy of this government is disastrous: It's waste, scandal, selling off public assets. It's the future generations of this province that are going to pay dearly for 12 years of this mismanagement and waste. It's my child and it's children across the province who are going to be paying for these mistakes.

For these government members to sit back and essentially go with the flow of decisions that are being made in the Premier's office, I think, is the wrong thing for these members to do.

I just want to close by referring to what I thought was an excellent article in today's Globe and Mail, titled "Is the Ontario Finance Minister Living in Fiscal Fantasyland?" It talks about the government assuming what revenue growth is going to be, and of course, they're way off on that.

I just urge the government to consider in which direction they're taking this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from London—Fanshawe and the context that she brought to this debate.

First, though, I'd like to welcome Paisley and the member from Kenora—Rainy River. Actually, it's really good that Paisley's here in the House today. She's as cute as can be.

Some of the members heckled us and they said, "Well, why shouldn't we sell Hydro One?" You shouldn't sell Hydro One because it is generating revenue that you as a government need. The Financial Accountability Officer has blown your entire financial plan up with his report that he brought to this Legislature. He goes on to say that the FAO estimated that the province will lose net revenues of \$444 million a year by 2025, which is going to affect Ms. Paisley right there. It's her future that you're gambling on, just so that you can try to cook up the books and balance that budget for 2017-18.

To add insult to injury, in addition, an \$800-million special payment from Hydro One following the IPO is borrowed money. Hydro One is borrowing money to give

to the provincial government, but Hydro One customers will receive no benefit from this loan. Not only that, but when the IPO was negotiated, this province—this government—paid \$3 million to do so—unbelievable.

You are doubling down on a poor economic strategy which will affect future generations. Ms. Paisley is going to come here one day, and she's going to say, "What were you thinking?"

At least we will be able to stand in our place and say that we challenged you, day in and day out, because selling off Hydro One is not good for the people of this province. It certainly isn't going to buy more infrastructure when you can't even figure out how to fund the infrastructure that you have right now on the books.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? The member for York South-Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I think so.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I shouldn't be standing. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's okay.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thought it was going to be me. Thank you.

I want to thank the member for London-Fanshawe for her comments on the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I do want to specify, though, that—I know she lamented the fact that the government didn't speak longer in the leadoff. I spoke for roughly 15 minutes. I spoke about the debt retirement charge and the fact that it will be removed from commercial, industrial and non-residential users nine months earlier than what was projected—in April 2018—but I didn't hear any comments on that.

Changes to the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit—I also spoke about the horse racing industry and the Horse Racing Partnership Plan and how OLG would support live horse racing in Ontario; and how we're moving the regulation to MAG's Licence Appeal Tribunal. I spoke about the new grant program to support live horse racing.

I also spoke about the security sector and how Ontario is taking a leadership role in establishing the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System.

I further spoke about the amendments we are proposing to the Trillium Trust Act to increase transparency. I also spoke about the investments that our government is making in infrastructure, as we heard, in many different ridings, helping small business; about investing in people's skills. I spoke about our government's vision to build up our province.

In conclusion, I want to say that—she knows this well—we're all here to do our very best to represent our constituencies and rest our head on our pillow, knowing that we've done so.

The Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to thank the member from Sudbury, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the member from York South-Weston.

In particular to the member from York South-Weston, I did listen to your debate and you did touch on each one of those. In jest, it was like a little bit of an infomercial, because when you think about how big this bill is, and you only talked for 15 minutes, there were little snippets. It would have been nice to have a little more detail on those things.

I did focus on Hydro One because that is one of the two biggest items, other than the Trillium Trust changes, that is extremely concerning. Some of the other items you mentioned: They're not horrible; right? We're making sure that we get on the record and really stress passionately that Hydro One is the wrong decision. It is a false presentation when you say, "We can't do this unless we throw the furniture into the fire." That doesn't make a lot of sense.

I think most people, when they come to those crossroads in their lives, make different decisions about putting everything at stake. It's just like rolling the dice. You're gambling away Hydro One, putting it on the table. You're risking Hydro One. We don't agree with it. We think it's a revenue source that needs to stay in public hands, continue to reap the benefits of that income that comes out year after year, about \$500 million—

Ms. Cindy Forster: They shouldn't be able to sleep at night because 83% of people—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. As the public said, 83% do not want to sell it. The point of my debate today was to drive that home to you, and I'm glad I did.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Cindy Forster: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. I'd just like to correct my record from last Thursday during the private member's bill of the member from Nickel Belt. I said there were 1.7 francophones living in Ontario, and I believe it should have been 1.7 million. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm glad we got that cleared up.

It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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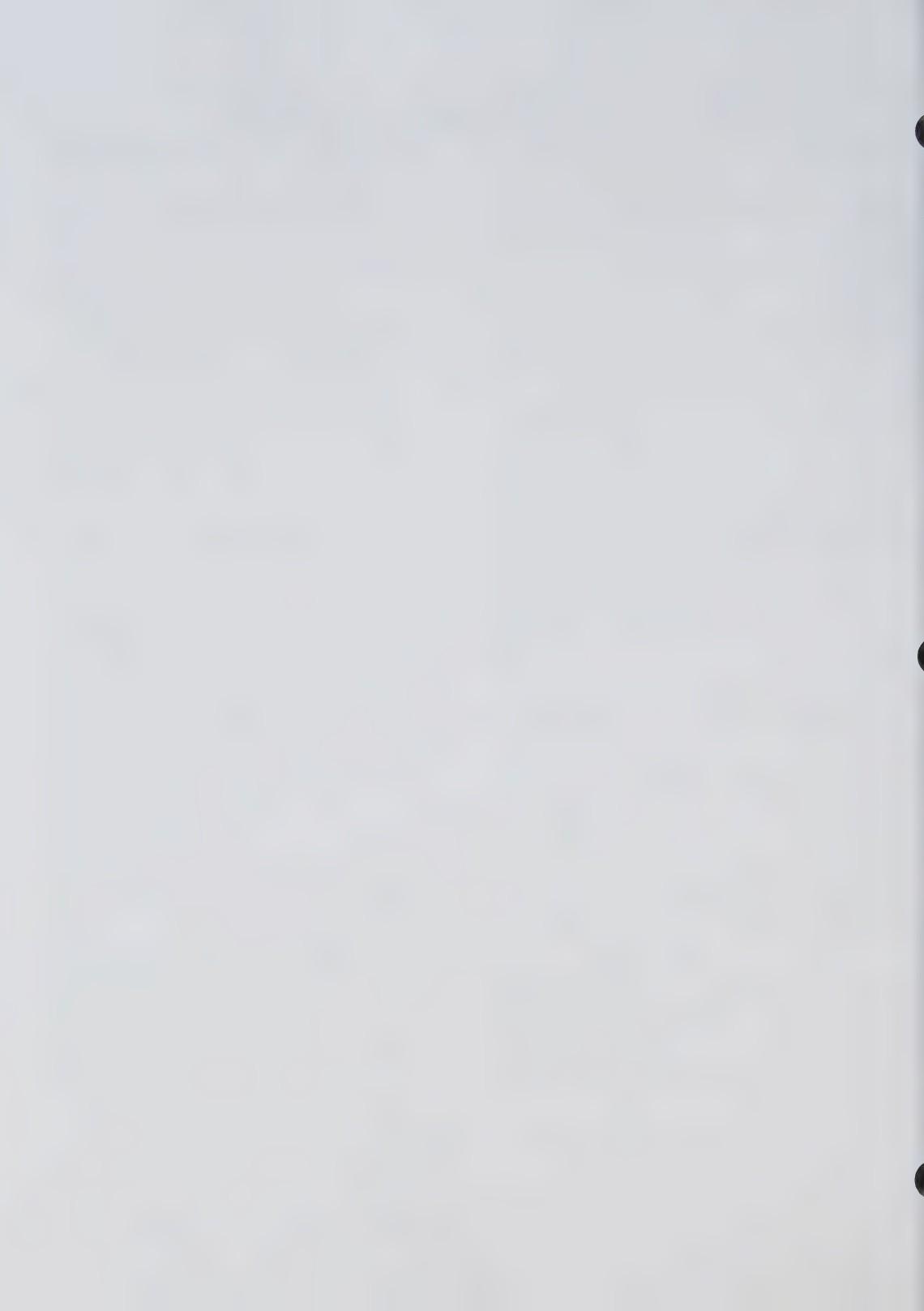
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 November 2015

Mardi 24 novembre 2015



**Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac**

**Président
L'honorable Dave Levac**

**Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Mr. Speaker, this morning I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

I want to say that I'm very pleased to rise in my place in the House today to add some comments to this debate on Bill 135, on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge. Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, is going to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole by maximizing the value and reliability of energy transmission projects while maintaining our government's commitment to energy conservation.

Amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, will replace the current electricity planning process, known as the integrated power system plan process, with the long-term energy plan process. This new process would enshrine the successful 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plans to ensure that future long-term energy plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, and community and aboriginal engagement.

As well, the amendments would empower the Independent Electricity System Operator to undertake competitive selection or procurement processes for electricity transmission projects when appropriate. This would help

ensure that ratepayers get the greatest value for new infrastructure investment.

In this new planning process, conservation is the first resource considered before building expensive new generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. Our government believes that this approach will provide multiple benefits to Ontarians by helping families and businesses save money on energy bills, reducing the need to build expensive energy projects and upward pressure on energy prices.

Significantly, this conservation initiative would contribute to fulfilling Ontario's climate change strategy objectives by lowering greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution while ensuring that ratepayers get the best value from new infrastructure developments.

The second major focus of the bill involves amendments to the Green Energy Act that would introduce two energy and water conservation initiatives. The first of the initiatives is the energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings. This initiative would require property owners of buildings of 50,000 square feet or more to track those buildings' energy and water use and greenhouse gas emissions over time in order to determine how a building's energy performance is changing and how it compares to similar buildings. Many leading jurisdictions around the world in energy consumption have such reporting and benchmarking requirements already in place.

Recently, a similar program in the United States was found by the Environmental Protection Agency to result in a 7% improvement in energy consumption savings over a three-year period in buildings that continuously met conservation benchmarks. Think of that, Speaker—that savings on energy bills. Thus, this initiative shows promise to achieve greater energy conservation, and its expected low implementation cost will result in further savings for building owners—something they are certainly all looking towards.

The second initiative created through the amendment is the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances that would set water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water. This initiative would assist energy-conscious Ontarians in making more environmentally friendly choices when shopping for appliances and would strengthen Ontario's leadership in the regulation of product energy efficiency in Canada by creating more stringent energy requirements. I have to say, when I go shopping for new appliances with my sons, the first thing that they look at

when they're with me in the stores are those signs showing that these appliances save energy.

These initiatives would go a long way in helping families and businesses save money on their energy bills, reduce the need to build expensive energy infrastructure along with greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Not only does that save our environment in the future, but decreasing air pollution certainly helps those 2.4 million Ontarians who have respiratory difficulties. Any reduction in air pollution in this province certainly decreases their need for expensive hospitalizations. Furthermore, these initiatives would bring Ontario in line with other jurisdictions, saving consumers money and showing our province's continued leadership in setting efficiency standards.

In closing, this bill is yet another example of this government's commitment to ensuring that long-term energy planning in this province prioritizes energy conservation and also the environment while ensuring the best value for Ontario ratepayers. That, Mr. Speaker, is something we all want to see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, and thanks to my colleague from Cambridge for leading off this debate. I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to be a part of this debate. It's an important discussion and, obviously, an important piece of legislation. I think everyone in the Legislature recognizes how important the long-term energy planning process is for, perhaps, a number of obvious reasons. I'll try to break some of those down in terms of the time that I have to make remarks today.

May I say, certainly as an MPP from northern Ontario and as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I'm very conscious of the long-term planning projects that are under way and are a priority for our government in terms of the north. That really is because we know that there is a high level of needs. It's also important that we actually do it right, that we get the process right. That, in fact, is really what Bill 135 is all about.

0910

I think it is extremely important that we bring forward a process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to ever-changing policy and system needs. So it needs to be pretty fluid in that regard. So as part of this particular legislation, we're introducing two new initiatives to help Ontario's families and businesses, and the province as a whole, to conserve energy and water to manage costs.

As my colleague pointed out, and I think it's probably worthwhile repeating, Bill 135 very specifically amends the Electricity Act, 1998, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, to replace the current electricity planning process, known as the integrated power system plan, the IPSP—we've all got these acronyms; we try to avoid them—with a long-term energy plan process, and also to empower the IESO to undertake competitive selection or procurement processes for electricity transmission projects when appropriate. That's obviously a very import-

ant part of the work we're doing today, in terms of this particular legislation.

I think it's fair to say—and I trust there would be agreement by most members in the House—that the long-term energy plan process has proven to be more adaptive to a fast-moving policy environment than the previous process under the integrated power system plan. Again, a significant part of this is that the long-term energy plan would continue to be informed by a high degree of stakeholder, public, and aboriginal and Métis community feedback.

In terms of the energy system planning process itself, again I can speak specifically about some of the projects that are under way in Thunder Bay, but I think it's important to put the larger context of this legislation in place. The legislation would enshrine the long-term energy planning process that developed both the 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plans to ensure that future long-term energy plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost effectiveness, clearly an important point; reliability, hugely important; clean energy, something we need to continue to move forward on; and, of course, community and aboriginal engagement, again something that I work on very hard, as a local member, to make sure that community and aboriginal engagement continues to be part of the process. This basically enshrines this.

From a transmission point of view, the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, would be authorized to plan and undertake competitive approaches for transmitter selection and procurement of transmission projects to ensure that ratepayers do indeed get the greatest value from new infrastructure investments, which are significant investments. That's pretty important and significant and, I think, obviously needs to be put into our legislation, which is why it's there and why we hope to get support for it.

Other aspects of Bill 135: It also proposes amendments to the Green Energy Act, 2009, to enable the implementation of two energy and water conservation initiatives—again, hugely important—one of them being large building energy and water reporting and benchmarking. This would require the owners of large buildings—I think it's 50,000 square feet and above, in terms of actual size—to annually report their monthly whole building energy and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and other building characteristics.

The other of those two amendments would be water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances, which would set water efficiency standards for energy-using products and appliances that consume water as well. Of course, examples would be, obviously, residential and commercial clothes washers and integrated washer-dryers, residential and commercial dishwashers, and commercial ice makers.

Under this proposed legislation, the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board would independently develop a plan for achieving the policy goals of the long-term energy plan. It's complex but it's actually remarkably

straightforward in terms of what the goals and the commitments are under this legislation.

I think we all acknowledge a number of facts, one of them being that long-term energy planning is absolutely essential. The right decisions need to be made in terms of our long-term energy planning all across the province.

Again, I have, perhaps, specific and particular sensitivities related to northern Ontario and some projects that indeed are priorities for our government. I'm working very closely with all those involved in those projects.

Long-term energy planning is absolutely essential to a clean, reliable and affordable energy future—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Affordable? That's a joke.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I see I have agreement from the other side of the House, and I'm very grateful to have that.

The fact is that I think Ontarians, the people of our province—and again, I can reflect on northerners' point of view: They've been very clear to me and to many of us that they want to play a more significant role in the government's long-term energy planning process. That is why we have listened and we are introducing the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but there's only so much time that we have to make our remarks: If passed, this legislation would ensure that a consistent and a transparent long-term planning process is followed. That's very important.

It would enshrine in law a requirement for extensive consultation with the public, with stakeholders and with aboriginal groups in the development of energy plans. That is already standard practice, but we're going to enshrine that in legislation.

It would amend the Green Energy Act to introduce those two new initiatives I just referenced earlier that I know have support from all sides of the House to help Ontario families and businesses—

Mr. John Yakabuski: How about repealing it?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: A warm smile from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Those two initiatives will help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole, Mr. Speaker. I don't mean to divert from you. I know I've got to pay attention to you, as Speaker, and I understand that.

We want to conserve energy and water, to manage costs. That's something that's a huge priority for everyone. We want to enshrine that.

We also want to support the increased competition and enhance ratepayer value by empowering the integrated energy system operator to undertake those competitive processes for transmitter selection or procurement when appropriate.

It's probably not a bad time to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the 2013 long-term energy plan was the biggest, the most open, the most comprehensive consultation process in the Ministry of Energy's history.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you say.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me give you some examples of that, just to more completely make that point.

Part of that openness, part of that comprehensive quality, was that we posted the long-term energy plan discussion document on the Environmental Registry. There were 12 regional sessions, including a round table discussion with stakeholders and open houses for the public. There were 10 aboriginal sessions.

There was an academic focus, an innovation session, something that we probably cannot speak enough about in terms of the importance of so many initiatives in the province. That certainly is something we relate to, from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines' perspective: the importance to move forward in innovation.

In fact, we had a northern leaders' dialogue a couple of weeks ago. Under an agreement we have with the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors, we bring together the large municipal and aboriginal leaders twice a year to discuss the northern Ontario growth plan, moving forward on the northern Ontario growth plan. What was one of the clear priorities of our discussion a couple of weeks ago was innovation, entrepreneurship and innovation, and how important it is. That's certainly a very important part of these discussions as well.

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So in terms of the long-term energy plan, to get myself back on track with that, there was an academic-focused innovation session that was done in development with the Mowat Centre. The Mowat Centre, of course, actually has a very important relationship with the Northern Policy Institute, something else that we're very proud of that we've been supporting through the northern Ontario growth plan. One of our benchmark initiatives when we released the growth plan in March 2011 was to put in place an independent, not-for-profit research institute, the Northern Policy Institute, which has been doing some remarkable work, and we're very, very proud of that.

As I get close to needing to wrap up, Mr. Speaker—the legislation before us is indeed important. I do think it's something that, again, I would hope we'd get support on from all sides of the House for all the right reasons. I think it's fair to say that the current integrated power system plan, or the IPSP as it is described—the current process, I think it's not impolite to say that it is slow. May I say I think it's not impolite to say that it might be a tad unresponsive to the changing environment of the energy sector, and I think it's fair to say it's costly. So the fact is that this legislation is very much focused on trying to make a difference in terms of how those decisions are made while we continue to enshrine in legislation a transparent, consultative opportunity for everyone.

There is not much time left, but certainly one of the issues I would like to have had more time to speak about is energy conservation. It's one of our government's key goals. Again, I think this is something that is shared by all members of the Legislature. There really is no argument that conservation can save families and businesses money on their energy bills. It does reduce the need to build expensive energy infrastructure,

and it reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution as well. That's all good.

So these are all important aspects of Bill 135. Again, I'm looking forward to the fullness of the debate this morning and am grateful to have had an opportunity to express my feelings on this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about another government long-term energy plan. I've been here four years, and I think we've seen five long-term energy plans here. It just seems that every week there's a new one out. We should change the name from long-term to short-term.

We see a record here, where peak power is up 77% under this government. We have the gas plants cancellation costing \$1 billion, moved to Kingston, where a plant is now idle, not being used, so why we need to double the capacity there I'm not sure. We have the smart meter plan; \$2 billion. We have the highest rates in North America. The sale of Hydro One—the Financial Accountability Officer has already told them it's a net loss. It would be cheaper to go out and borrow money—not that they need to borrow any more money. This government has double the revenue they had when they came to power, and they're still broke.

What are they doing? We have people leaving the province now because they can't afford to operate and run a business. Ontarians refuse to pay the high price of our own manufacturing because it's too expensive. We buy American manufactured goods because their hydro rates are now cheaper.

It's a real mess, and where are we going? More regulation. We have a government that specializes in regulation. I meet with businesses and small farmers; they talk about the amount of paperwork that's required. They can't do their work. One farmer in our area built his own generator, a diesel-powered generator—it's cheaper than getting on Hydro One. As people are getting off Hydro One, there are fewer people to pay for the grid. That means, again, higher rates, and this government is talking about another 42%. I don't know where it ends. I guess it ends when we can't afford to even run our plants that are here, we shut off the lights altogether and declare bankruptcy, because that's where we're going. We see it every day, and it's time that we take a different direction and look at the consumer of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm particularly somewhat in a very good mood today. Why? Because yesterday I was with family up in Timmins at an unfortunate family funeral. My uncle Conrad Carriere passed away. He's the last uncle from my mom's side. He was a doer. He stood for his community, and he acted. He was a very honourable man. He was a man who was only completed by his wife, my aunt Lucille.

Ma tante Lucille, je te dis bonjour aujourd'hui. Puis, je vais dire que mon oncle Conrad est tout le temps à la même place où, moi, quand j'ai besoin de ma mère, Rita Mantha—il est tout le temps là et va tout le temps t'écouter. Fait rien que de lui parler; il va t'écouter.

We're talking about this bill here this morning. We're in this bill; I'm looking at it. The IESO, the OEB, the OPA: It's an alphabet soup of what's going on in this bill.

My friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and also the member from Cambridge, who I work a lot with on committee, are two individuals who I find very honourable. I enjoy sitting and having many discussions with them.

However, let's call a spade a spade, and let's call this bill what it is. It's a freeway to privatization is what it is. This is what's happening with this bill: When you look at this bill, and you're going to open up all of it, and you're going to restrict all of it to any type of people who are going to come in and question this process—any type of testing, any type of engagement with the communities—you're going to open up a freeway and make it that much faster to make more gas plants, to make more problems within our energy act and increase rates that much more quickly. This is what you're doing. Come on, let's call a spade a spade. That's what you're doing. You're taking away public scrutiny is what you're doing. You're taking away oversight. And you're celebrating this? Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: It's a always pleasure to rise and speak in support of the government bill, Bill 135.

Let me begin my remarks by sending my condolences to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his loss. Anytime you have a family loss, it's a sad thing for the family.

But I want to challenge the member opposite because the 2013 long-term energy plan had the largest and most comprehensive consultation process. So I'd like to think that the member opposite of the third party always listens to his constituents. You know the government has consulted on this bill. We posted the discussion documents on the Environmental Registry—12 regional sessions, including the round table discussions with stakeholders and open houses for the public, 10 aboriginal sessions, an academic-focused innovation session that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines talked about with the Mowat Centre, and 7,883 question-responses. So I want to challenge the member opposite when he says that this is like an alphabet soup and that it wasn't discussed etc.

The proposed bill, if passed, would amend the Electricity Act, 1998, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. At the end of the day, there's a lot of criticism about the proposed legislation. I want to remind both opposition parties that the proposed legislation was drafted in consultation with the public. At the end of the day, I constantly hear the members opposite saying that the government has not listened. Well, folks, we have

listened, we have consulted, and now we're moving forward.

This morning, I want to pay tribute to Robert Fisher. He was at the session this morning at the library. He talked about the changes from typewriter to the tweeting process in the Queen's Park gallery. The proposed legislation will move with the times and technology. I believe that technology is there to support what we do here at the Legislature. I want to remind the members opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today. When we take a look at this particular bill, there's lots to be worried about. In particular, I found it interesting that one of the members opposite mentioned that this bill, Bill 135, would enshrine the long-term energy plan process to develop consistent, economically viable options. Well, I have a problem with his concept of what's economically viable in Ontario these days because, quite frankly, it seems like they're doubling down; they're adding burden upon burden on taxpayer shoulders.

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Just yesterday, when we met with OREA, I had Ontario realtors from the counties of Huron, Perth and Bruce joining me, and with that said, they're offering concerns that seniors are going to be burdened with energy audits. Those conservation energy audits are a concern in that if a senior wanted to sell their home, they would have to take a look at their windows and their furnaces. The burden to ensure that their furnaces and their windows meet specs and are energy-efficient, if you will, will totally take away from, perhaps, their life savings and/or the ultimate return on the sale of their house. Do seniors in Ontario really deserve this? I think not.

Another thing that I'm concerned about in this particular bill is how they revisit the Green Energy Act. If they were serious about being economically viable and ensuring that a process in terms of long-term energy planning is viable, they would be throwing out microFIT contracts and FIT contracts altogether, because they're paying out subsidies that we cannot afford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for a final comment.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

I want to thank the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Algoma–Manitoulin; my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt for her very wise comments; and, of course, the member from Huron–Bruce.

Let me also express my condolences to my friend and colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin on the passing of your uncle. He sounds like a remarkable, special man. Of course, we all feel for those when we have those losses.

But now that we're back in the Legislature, and the member will follow with his comments, I actually found his comments a little startling from the point of view that I also think it's fair to say that I could look at the third

party, particularly the member as someone who recognizes what a priority consultation is and what priority transparency is—and to suggest that this is actually an open door to do something else simply isn't reflective of what's in the legislation or the intent of the legislation.

I understand opposition politics. I spent eight years myself on the other side of the House when I was first elected, so I recognize that you have an obligation, perhaps, to go on a bit.

If one looks at this legislation, again, as my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt pretty accurately pointed out, look at the level and the kind of consultation we had.

May I say, also, that the fact that the member for Huron–Bruce in particular talked about pieces of legislation that focused on the long-term energy planning in the past—the long and the short of it is that we really are determined to make this process work better for consumers, work better for businesses, work better in terms of long-term energy needs in the province. That's something that's a huge priority for our government, as I know it is for all members of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate. I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for a continuation of where he left off last—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the indulgence of the chamber in allowing me to finish the speech that I could not finish a couple of weeks back, and giving me the opportunity to finish it today.

It's interesting how you get the two perspectives. You've got the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who spoke at some length today talking about Bill 135 like this was the panacea: "This is the thing that is going to turn Ontario around. It's the best energy bill since sliced bread."

But then the opposition, you see, which has done its job of holding the government to account, points out the problems associated with the bill and the fear that we have, not just because we've somehow invented it. Based on the record of this government over the past 12 years, we have a fear about what could happen if this bill becomes law without significant amendment. We have some serious concerns about how the power is concentrated. The minister says, "Oh, this actually empowers the IESO and the OEB." That's the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board, two of the key components in managing the energy system, but they've become, quite frankly, tools of the government.

The number of directives this minister has used, I believe, is 37 since he has become the minister: directives telling the IESO and the OEB what to do. So 37 times he has issued a directive to those agencies saying, "You're going to do this." How independent is an agency when it's constantly working under the threat of a government directive, a ministerial directive, if they are not doing things or if their actions somehow displease the minister who happens to hold the office at the time?

So now they're codifying this in law, that the minister is going to draw up the long-term energy plan. The

Minister of Northern Development and Mines was so proud of that long-term energy plan that they did in 2013. He talked about the extensive consultation that took place across Ontario. Well, I would like to find out from members of this House—give me the names of two constituents who were actually consulted on the long-term energy plan. You see, when this government talks about consultation, this is what it means: “We will hand-pick a group of people who we know already in advance are going to be in general agreement with what we’re doing. We will bring them into a meeting. We will sit them down”—perhaps buy them pizza; you never know—“and then we’re going to leave that meeting, compile all the information from the meetings throughout the province, and we’re going to declare that we’ve had the most extensive consultations on this long-term energy plan ever in the history of the province.”

And all of the Liberal minions are going to stand and applaud, and there’s going to be a press conference and they are going to say, “Yes, yes, this has been an extensive consultation.” But then if you go and try to find anybody in the province of Ontario who was actually consulted, you can’t find them; you cannot find them. But first of all, they declare that a consultation is something where we put something out on a website, call it a meeting, never really had a meeting, but that’s consultation too; that’s consultation too. We’ve seen it time and time again in this process here in Liberal Ontario.

So right off the bat, the basis of what they say, that they’ve had extensive consultations on long-term energy plans or anything else, is absolutely false. It is invented; it is fictitious; it is not true. In their mind, they believe they’ve had consultations, but, Speaker, we have come to doubt the Liberal mind in this province. I think the people have come to doubt the Liberal mind; they have come to question it, and they’ve come to wonder what makes the Liberal mind work. Well, with their definition of consultations, I think you can get a pretty clear picture of what I’m talking about.

The biggest concern people across this province have about energy—the pillars of energy policy are sustainability, reliability and affordability. Let’s just start with affordability. That’s the number one issue for the people in the province of Ontario who pay their hydro bills every month: Is energy affordable in this province? If that was the question that was put to everyone in this province—“Is energy affordable in this province?”—I can categorically say that the majority of people would say no, and they would base it on the record of the past 12 years, where energy prices have quadrupled since 2003 when this government took office. Now, I want you to think about that, Speaker. That is not doubled, that is not tripled; that is quadrupled since this government took office. On-peak electricity was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour in 2003. On-peak electricity today is 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour.

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Now, through all of this time, every time you turn around, the government has come out with one of these new programs that are supposed to mitigate the damage

they’ve done. There has been a veritable cornucopia of programs since they came out with the Green Energy Act in 2009, because that was the biggest driver of the change in energy prices in this province. There were increases in energy prices from 2003 to 2009, but when they came out with the Green Energy Act, the whole world changed. The acceleration and the rapidity of energy increases became far greater than it had been in the past.

So the government was forced to do something, because they were under such duress, I would say, from the public, and from the members of the opposition, who were going home and hearing from their constituents about the problems in this province with regard to the price of energy.

One of the issues we’ve heard the most about in our ridings over the last seven years has been the price of energy, but interestingly enough, you never hear it from the members on the other side. We hear it in our constituencies, and the members of the third party hear it in their constituencies. But they would have you believe, on the Liberal side, that they never hear a complaint from anybody about energy prices. You never hear them raise it in the House.

But, you see, secretly, they don’t want to talk about it, but they know it’s happening. That’s why the government has brought in these so-called mitigation measures when it comes to the price of hydro.

So, here we are now with the latest one, the Ontario Electricity Support Program—

Hon. Mario Sergio: That’s a good program.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister responsible for seniors’ affairs says, “That’s a good program.”

Well, now, here is this new program. The government has now drawn some lines in the sand where some people are going to be getting a rebate on their energy bills. This is just the latest shell game. You see, at the end of the year, a couple of things are happening. The debt retirement charge is going to end—that’s 2016. The debt retirement charge is going to end on people’s hydro bills—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Aren’t you happy about that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes, we’re happy about that, but it should have ended in 2011. It should have ended in 2011. I say to the Associate Minister of Health, you should not be crowing about the end of the debt retirement charge in 2016. You should be ashamed of yourselves that it took five years longer for it to happen. That’s what you should be doing. You should be apologizing to the people of Ontario.

The debt retirement charge is going to end at the end of this year, the beginning of next year. But one of those so-called mitigation “we are the Liberals and we are guilty” programs, the clean energy benefit, is going to end too—10% off the hydro bill because they were so embarrassed by what happened on hydro bills. That 10% is going to end too.

Now, with the Ontario Electricity Support Program, if you’re one of these individuals who just falls outside of the line—the way I describe it is this: They are pitting one energy-poor family against another energy-poor fam-

ily, and the Liberals are drawing the battle line. They're drawing the line in the sand that says, "If you are on this side of the line, you're eligible for the Ontario Electricity Support Program. But if you're on that side of the line, you're not eligible."

If you're one of these people who falls just outside the line, not only do you not benefit or get any rebate or derive any other benefit from the Ontario Electricity Support Program, but you are now one of the rest of the province who pays for the program. These programs are self-sustaining within the energy envelope. You either benefit, or you pay for the benefit. Your rates are going to go up even more in order to pay for the benefit that you're not eligible for.

How does that make someone feel? The line is not like the equator, where it's an imaginary line, but it is paper-thin: a dollar on this side, a dollar difference on the other side. If you're one of those people who fall just outside that line where you're eligible, you must really have felt like you were about the unluckiest person in the world the day the Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli, brought out this so-called great program.

They not only believe it's a great program, but they're spending millions of dollars advertising it. You can't pick up a newspaper, you can't turn on the radio—I haven't seen it on television yet, but I haven't been watching that much television. But as I was driving last week throughout my riding, I don't know how many times I heard the ad about calling the 1-800 number—1-855 or whatever it is, something or other—to see if you qualify for the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It's basically telling people, "You know what? This government is wonderful. We're going to make energy affordable for you." Well, I say to the minister: The bottom line is, energy is not affordable, and each and every day it gets less affordable in Liberal Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Minister of Natural Resources, please stay. I'm not done yet.

What should they do? What should the Liberals do in order to bring real energy relief to the people of Ontario? Let me just preface this by going back a little bit and reminding you, Speaker, of how the Green Energy Act changed the energy landscape here in the province of Ontario. That was the critical piece of legislation.

Do you remember—well, I know you remember, Speaker, because you were here. You had already been here for quite some time, and you were here when energy was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Do you remember the famous George Smitherman? George Smitherman. Do you remember George Smitherman, Speaker? I know you do. He went for a tour and visited his friends at Samsung, and he came up with this plan. He came up with this plan that was going to bankrupt Ontario in energy but it was going to look really good from an environmental point of view. He decided to invent this Green Energy Act.

Since the Green Energy Act became law in 2009, that's when energy prices really escalated. Part of the Green Energy Act was that they were going to take forms

of energy generation that were unlikely to be able to make much penetration on their own because of the costs involved, and—speaking back on one of those pillars of energy policy, reliability—the reliability factor wasn't there either.

When you look at something like large-scale wind developments, are they sustainable? They're sustainable from the point of view that, as long as we're on this Earth, the wind is going to blow at some time. The problem is that we don't know when. So are they sustainable? Yes. Reliable? Absolutely not. No one could ever argue that something that is reliant on nature is reliable, because nature is fickle at best. But nature rules the day. We don't control nature; we have to live with nature and prepare and deal with nature as best we can. When she's having a good day, it's wonderful. When she's having a bad day, it's not very pretty. We don't have that control over nature, so we don't have that control over when the wind blows or when it doesn't blow. That inherently makes the energy form unreliable.

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Solar was another one. The government paid huge subsidies to these types of generation. So there was also solar. Is solar sustainable? Of course, because we will have the sun—when we no longer have the sun, we will no longer be. It's as simple as that. Everything we have depends upon the sun. The sun will be there long after the sons and daughters over there are gone; the sun will be there long after I'm gone.

So is it sustainable? Yes. Is it reliable? No, because the sun interacts with Mother Nature, and sometimes those nasty clouds block the sun from getting to us. Then we don't have sun. And because we have an earth that rotates, we only have the sun, at best, for part of the day. So is it reliable? No.

Then we go to the third pillar: Is it affordable? The Liberals have answered that in spades over and over and over again. I could say "over and over" a few more times because that's how many energy increases we've had since 2009. Every six months the price of electricity has gone up in this province—every six months. There has not been a six-month cycle where the price of electricity has not gone up in this province. That is, in short, the answer to the question, "Is it affordable?"

So they've made their decision. They've made their decision on how we're going to generate energy, and the decision for this majority government is that we are not going to generate energy based on the third pillar, affordability, and we are not going to generate based on reliability.

I like to say positive things about the government whenever I have the opportunity. I certainly agree with the government—I don't necessarily agree with their schedule, and I know I have people in the third party who will disagree with me, but it's vitally important that we proceed with the refurbishment of our nuclear generators. Some 60% of our electricity is coming from nuclear generation. We can't survive in this province without it. It is not replaceable in any short term. So it is vitally

important that we refurbish our nuclear generators in this province, our nuclear units.

However, the schedule that this government has, or is at least looking at, by the time they can actually make a decision—perhaps they're having more consultations. Actually, no, they're not having consultations. They just can't seem to make a decision. By the time they actually get to going ahead and approving the next plan for nuclear refurbishment, we're going to have a huge problem in this province, and that is the overlap. When a unit is down, we're not taking a few megawatts out of service; we're taking, in the case of Darlington, closer to 900 megawatts out of service; in the case of the Bruce, we're taking around 800 megawatts out of service at that time. When you take those down, because of the calendar, we're going to have times when we have more than one nuclear unit down for refurbishment at the same time. That is going to have a huge impact on the reliability of our supply, because we're going to be caught in a situation where demand could very well exceed supply.

Why has that happened? Because the government couldn't make up its mind and was playing the political game about whether or not they'd do it, whether they'd do a new build or whether they'd do refurbishment—we have to do both. Perhaps not at this moment do we have to do a new build, but we have to do both, because we're not going to be able to have a secure energy future if nuclear is not a big part of that mix here in the province of Ontario, full stop. It's not even possible.

There aren't enough places to put windmills to generate enough power to make this province go, and on a day that the wind doesn't blow, you'd have nothing anyway. So we are going to need to make those decisions with regard to nuclear power, with regard to refurbishment and with regard to new build.

Having said that, while those units are in refurbishment mode, while they are taken down for refurbishment or off for refurbishment, we're going to see a significant increase in our greenhouse gas emissions because we're going to have to fire up gas plants that are not normally running on a continuous basis. They've been there to be ramped up when the need is greater, and they pull them back down when the need is not there. We're going to have a situation where we're going to have a significant increase in our greenhouse gas emissions here in the province of Ontario.

All of those things are going to be issues that the government has to deal with over the next several years. Hopefully, there's a government in place that knows how to deal with them. We know that we have an election year in 2018, and hopefully things change so that the people who are in charge are able to handle that issue during that time.

But I want to talk a little more about the mechanics of Bill 135 here, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I had to make sure I had my glasses here, Speaker, because this printing is a little small for me.

George Vegh is an energy writer at McCarthy Tétrault. He wrote a very good piece on Bill 135 in

which he questions it on the same basis that we do: If enacted, are we simply cutting the legs off the IESO and the OEB and concentrating all of the decision-making—we get it. The decision-making powers always have rested and always will rest with the government. They'll rest in the minister's and the Premier's offices. We understand that. But there were always safeguards built in that they had to take into great significant consideration, and they would have to justify if they worked against the recommendations of the agencies the government created.

The OEB was created by the Conservative government many, many years ago, even before your time, Speaker. The IESO used to be the IMO, independent market operator, which was created by the Conservative government that you were a member of. It became the IESO under this government. And then remember the OPA? That was created by this government with Bill 100 back in about 2005. Then the OPA amalgamated with the IESO, because it was clear the government finally got our message that there were redundant agencies and one of them needed to be moulded into the other. So the OPA disappeared.

But, you see, the OPA, which is now part of the IESO—its work hasn't gone away; it just doesn't exist in name. But it was primarily created to act as a deflection shield for the government. You understand as well as I do that whenever the government had a situation where the news was not good, it always seemed to come from the OPA, because the government and the minister would say, "Well, that's the OPA. The OPA looks after that. We don't really have anything to do with that. The OPA deals with that."

But if there was ever an announcement that the government really felt proud about, the minister himself would trot out—or herself, depending upon the situation; Donna Cansfield was minister at one time. So depending on the situation, the ministers would make the announcements themselves, but when things went bad, then it was the OPA again. Good news: my problem. Bad news: their problem. Unbelievable how they used that agency to their own gain, just to treat it like a little bit of a game where, you know, "You're my fair-weather friend." The OPA was their fair-weather friend. When it was good news, "We love you at the OPA." When it was bad news, "Well, the OPA deals with that, and maybe they need to take a good look at that and see what they're doing."

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But all along, they were getting ministerial directives for almost everything they did, continuously. I don't want to single out the current energy minister, because his predecessors used ministry directives continuously as well. When the member from Scarborough was the minister, he issued 20-some ministerial directives, maybe more.

But just to put the case in point, when the member for Simcoe-Grey, Mr. Wilson, was the energy minister in the previous government, do you know how many ministerial directives he issued while he was Minister of Energy?

Mr. Steve Clark: Not very many.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Two. Two ministerial directives. We allowed the agencies to operate the way they were intended to do in the best interest of the people of Ontario. We didn't interfere unless it was absolutely necessary. Two directives for Mr. Wilson; 37 directives for the current minister. I leave that to the people to decide whether the world has changed that much—Conservative world; Liberal world.

I guess we know some people like to let things work through and trust the people they put in place and make a decision if it is necessary, and some people just like to meddle all the time because they're playing politics with the energy system.

Do you remember when Dwight Duncan brought in Bill 100? You were here. "We're going to take the politics out of the energy system." Do you remember? "There will be no politics in energy with Bill 100." That was Dwight Duncan. He was the energy minister at the time. Now, energy is more political than it has ever been. Since Adam Beck, energy has never been more political than it is today.

Why is that? Well, you see—I don't know if I can say this or not, but if I can: When you screw it up, you have to keep screwing. That's what happened to this energy system. They screwed it up so bad with Bill 100 and the Green Energy Act that now they can't get out of it. Every day they've got to do something more, because it's such a mess. The system can't heal itself because they have injected it with some kind of virus that is incurable. It's a virus of their doing, with their Green Energy Act, but it just continues to inflict more and more damage on the energy system. Each and every day they're trying to have some kind of a cure, hoping that maybe things will get better. Then they mask it and confuse it by saying, "This is the latest energy mitigation program that the government is bringing out on your behalf for the people of Ontario to help you with your hydro bills."

But it doesn't help, because every day, each and every one of those people out there—maybe it's different for the people on the Liberal side, but I've never had anybody come to my office and say, "You know what, John? That hydro is just too cheap. My bills—I can't stand it—are just getting too small. I'm so tired of how, every time I turn around, my hydro bills are going down." I have had nobody come to my office with that complaint.

Now, I don't know; have any of my colleagues had that complaint?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nobody here. Anybody in the third party had that complaint? No, no, no, no. But, what about over there? Are people telling you their bills are too low? Are they even telling you they're manageable?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: They're thanking us for closing the coal plants.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, they're not thanking you for closing coal plants.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, the member for Burlington has awakened and is engaged in the conversation.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is correct. Not correct about the coal plants, but that is correct. You do have a choice. I say to the member that you do have a choice. You could go back to your office, get on the phone and call some of your constituents. You could ask them, "What do you feel about your energy bills? Do you think they're too high? Do you think they're too low? Do you think they're just about right? Is there something we could be doing?"

I could ask the member: Did she call anybody in the last week in her constituency to ask them how their hydro bills are doing? Has she made that call to her constituents? That's what I would like to know. I would like to know, on behalf of everybody in the province of Ontario: How many over there are making those calls to their constituents? That would be a wonderful use of your time.

We hear about it. I cannot believe that they don't hear about it. I'm absolutely certain that they do.

Do you know what else I'm certain of, Speaker? And I understand how it works. I may have been a little harsh on the member from Burlington there because I realize they don't really get much to say about this.

Mr. Steve Clark: They're not allowed to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're not allowed to. The backbenchers in the Liberal party—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can rise if you want to, I say to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

The backbenchers in the Liberal Party are basically told what to say. All of the orders come from the Premier's office. If they want to be viewed favourably in the eyes of the Premier, they will do as they're told.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sit down, Bob. There's no point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Point of order: the member from Mississauga East.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. That would be Mississauga—Streetsville.

While my colleague is welcome to make his case, he is, however, constrained by the standing orders from either imputing motive—which he has just done—or from making an assertion against members, which he has just done.

Mr. Steve Clark: You should stand and talk about your constituents—the fact that their hydro bills are too high. Why don't you represent your constituents and talk about their hydro bills?

Mr. Bob Delaney: He can talk about whatever it is he wants, but he cannot do so by imputing motive on behalf of members, either on his side or on this side, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): It's not a point of order. The member will continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from Mississauga—Streetsville must be on a crusade to get his name into Hansard as often as possible because he continues to

raise ridiculous and fictitious points of order. I am not impugning motives or making assertions in any way, shape or form.

I am stating a fact of life in Liberal Ontario. The members on that side are told what to say. They get their speaking notes. They get their marching orders. They come into this House and they do as they're told. And if they want to please the Premier, they're going to continue doing that. From time to time, there will be a little bit of a charade about standing up and asking a question and pretending that they're holding the minister to account, but that's just the way it works over there. That's just the way it works, with puffball questions. At the end of the day, nothing really changes.

Having said that, I want to try to get my three minutes in so I'm going to try—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Order, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm going to try to lower the temperature, as the Speaker says all the time, on the folks over there because they get very sensitive and then they start to react, and then I have a hard time getting my message across.

As I was saying about George Vegh: The point of it was the independence of the so-called independent agencies. That is the key: the independence of the so-called independent agencies. It even exists in their name. That is the irony of it, Speaker. The Independent Electricity System Operator: They used to be the ones who would write the LTERP, the long-term energy plan. Under this bill, it is the minister who's going to write the LTERP, not the IESO.

Right off the bat, I think in a reasonable person's mind that would conjure up a picture of: "Boy, is this making the independent agency more powerful or less powerful; more influential or less influential; more relevant to energy policy in the province of Ontario or less relevant to energy policy in the province of Ontario?" I think a reasonable person would probably come to the conclusion that if the minister is now codifying into law things that required a ministerial directive in the past, you are weakening the independence of those agencies. Given the fact that we have had, every six months, year after year, massive increases in the price of energy in this province, who do you think the people would rather have being influential on energy policy? The so-called independent agencies? Or the government that has brought them a quadrupling of energy prices in their term?

Well, I'm quite confident in saying that the people would want those independent agencies to retain their independence, to retain their power—not power to be exercised willy-nilly or in a nefarious way, but to retain their power to be as influential as possible. The technocrats who understand the energy system should be the ones that the minister relies on to a great degree in devising energy policy.

But never forget that we are all here to serve the people. Number one, energy policy or any other policy, if it does not serve the people, then it is the wrong policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the time for this morning's debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The House will stand recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome somebody we all know who's been in Alberta for some time: Marion Nader, who's here with her minister. She's here attending question period today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' west gallery today we have Jennifer Wilson, who is the executive director of the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society, from my riding of Peterborough, and Jennifer McLauchlan, who also works for the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. They're here today as part of their advocacy day for children's aid societies for Ontario.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to welcome Stephen Scott and Jennifer Moore from the Dufferin Child and Family Services, as well as Stephen Bald, Lucie Bais-trocchi and Bryan Schone from the Peel Children's Aid Society. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We're joined today in the members' gallery, and I believe soon to be in one of the public galleries, by a number of very special guests. We are joined today by the mayor of Sora, Italy, Dr. Ernesto Tersigni; Monsignor Gerardo Antonazzo; Monsignor Antonio Lecce; and Monsignor Bruno Antonellis.

We also have Frank Cipollone, Vince and Rita Mari-ani, Rocco and Mary Grossi, Joe Tersigni and my very good friend Sam Ciccolini, who I believe will be joining us in one of the galleries soon. Welcome to our special guests.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am delighted to welcome today to Queen's Park Denise Dilbey, Jeff Morley and Jack McCrudden of the Guelph and District Association of Realtors, as well as Daniel Moore, who for years has been our executive director at the Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce page captain Benjamin Shoalts's mother, Kerry Shoalts, and his aunt Shannon Donnelly, who are here in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: As members know, today is Hamilton Day at Queen's Park.

Interjection: Go Tiger-Cats!

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yeah, I wish.

We'll be joined momentarily by His Worship Mayor Fred Eisenberger and many distinguished members of council.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Susan Carmichael and Melanie Cooper from Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions, the children's aid society of Simcoe-Muskoka, here to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to welcome members of the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario and the members of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to Queen's Park. I have had a number of meetings with them this morning, and I encourage everyone to attend the lunchtime reception in room 228.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome representatives from our local Huron-Bruce CAS branches: Shaun Joulis, Marie Parsons, Janet Culliton, Phyllis Lovell and Dave Wyles.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is Hamilton Day today and we have a former mayor of Hamilton with us as well in the gallery: Larry Di Ianni and his wife—oh, no, his wife is not with him, but he's here with a number of other Hamiltonians as well. Welcome.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to introduce and welcome Heather Morrison, the board chair of the Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington.

As well, in the members' gallery are Sylvie DesHaies, chair of the political action committee of the Kingston and Area Real Estate Association; and Susan Nish, executive officer, Kingston and Area Real Estate Association. Welcome.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to the House today Christianne Newton, Lisa Cyr-Ault and Paul Martin from the Rideau-St. Lawrence Real Estate Board, as well as Adam Rayner from the Kingston real estate board.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think we all want to welcome the grade 5 class from Royal St. George's College who are here in the public gallery today, along with their fine, dedicated teacher, Mr. Kearsey. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Phyllis Lovell and David Wyles from Bruce Grey Child and Family Services. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: A little bit earlier, when I introduced the guests who are here, I did forget one name, and that is Danny Montesano, who will also be joining us today.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome Sue Christiansen, a friend and a great volunteer from Perth-Wellington.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege to welcome Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU, here today for a press conference, along with Monte Vieselmeyer, Gord Longhi, Tom O'Neill, Lyndsay Chapman, Alex Sawicki, Greg Arnold, Tim Humphries, Gareth Jones and Jim Richards. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to introduce a number of members of our Ukrainian Canadian community who are here with us today. As you know, it's Holodomor Awareness Week this week. They were here today in front of the Legislature to launch the Holodomor awareness tour and the Holodomor mobile classroom, which the province has funded.

With us today are a number of guests. I won't be able to introduce you all by name, but I do want to highlight a

few of the people who are here and thank you all for coming.

I'd like to start in the east members' gallery. We have with us Bishop Stephen Chmilar, of the Ukrainian Canadian Catholic church. We have Bishop Andriy, of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada.

Up in the gallery, we have Bob Onyschuk, who is chairing the Holodomor awareness tour. We have Denny Dzerowicz, one of the inspirations behind the tour. We have Taras Bahriy, who is president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto branch. We have Victor Hetmanczuk, who is the president of the Canada Ukraine Foundation.

We have with us a survivor of the Holodomor of 1932-33: Stepan Horlatsch is with us today as well.

Thank you all for joining us at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will entertain further introductions.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Mark Kartusch from the Highland Shores Children's Aid Society, and chair of the board, Mike McLeod, who wears many hats in Prince Edward county.

Miss Monique Taylor: I am very pleased to welcome many folks from Hamilton today, including two guests who I have brought into the side gallery here. We have Judi Partridge, from ward 15, and Jason Farr, from ward 2. Up there, I see our former mayor Larry Di Ianni, and I'm sure there are many others from Hamilton.

Welcome to Hamilton Day at Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Although I don't see them in the chamber right now, I do also want to welcome OPSEU president Smokey Thomas; the chair of the MERC committee, correctional officer Monte Vieselmeyer; and Tom O'Neill to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yesterday, I was pleased to meet with representatives from the Chatham-Kent real estate board. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Janice Wieringa, Barb Phillips and Michael Gibbons. It was a pleasure to meet with you yesterday. Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Colle: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to move unanimous consent for a moment's silence and for us to send condolences to the Alberta Legislature for the tragic death of a colleague member, an MLA of the Alberta Legislature, who died yesterday while trying to help a fellow Albertan in a car accident. I'd like a moment of silence for the passing of MLA Manmeet Bhullar.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With your indulgence, I did see a couple more introductions to do before we interrupt with that, and I want to give that its full respect. So with your indulgence, I'm going to finish with the introductions, as I saw there were a few more to be made.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome Colette Prévost, the CEO of York Region Children's Aid Society, to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I, too, would like to welcome two hard-working folks from CAS Highland Shores: Mark

Kartusch, executive director, and chair Mike McLeod. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd also like to welcome, from the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society, Jennifer Wilson and Jennifer McLaughlan.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to welcome our new constituency assistant, Kimberley Aherne, who is joining us today; and a very good friend, Amiel Blajchman, who is a neighbour but also a great community activist. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEATH OF MEMBER FOR CALGARY-GREENWAY

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent today to rise and observe a moment of silence to mark the tragic and untimely death of Manmeet Singh Bhullar, a member of the Alberta Legislature. He was a leader, a friend, a role model and somebody who embodied true values of public service. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Bhullar family in this difficult time.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll consider this a unanimous consent similar to the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and collectively do that as one. The unanimous consent is that we rise and observe a moment of silence to mark the tragic death yesterday of Manmeet Bhullar, a member of the Alberta Legislature. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask—first of all, thank you all for joining us, but I would ask all members of this place to stand and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Pray be seated.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier. Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick all provide child protection services for youth over the age of 16. As you know, in Ontario, children's aid societies are forced to turn away youth over 16 unless they are already receiving assistance. We are turning young people away when they are asking for help.

Premier, when will you extend and fund child protection services to youth over the age of 16?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is going to want to comment on the specifics, but I appreciate the member opposite raising this important concern.

I know that the minister has been working on extending supports. I know that there is more that we can do. I will say to the member opposite that we are looking at

how to best support children in care, young people in care, across the province, including how to support them in their education path and how to help them in post-secondary. We will, in the supplementary, speak to the specifics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Well, Premier, it isn't even mentioned in the minister's mandate letter, so I'm not sure how we can talk about how important it is if you don't task her with the responsibility in her mandate letter.

Not only do other provinces believe it's right to provide care to youth over the age of 16, but the Youth Leaving Care Working Group's 2012 report, Blueprint for Fundamental Change to Ontario's Child Welfare System, called for the age of protection to be extended to 18. The UN defines a child as 18 years old and below. By ending support at 16, Ontario is actually in contravention of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies also supports extending child protection services to the age of 18. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth also supports raising the age of protection to the age of 18.

Minister, when will you extend and fund child protection services to the age of 18?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank my critic from the opposition party for this very important question on this particular day when we have so many people in from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and our aboriginal partners in children's aid. We talked about exactly what she's asking about this morning: the age of protection for children in Ontario.

As I'm sure the critic knows from attending briefings, the Child and Family Services Act review has recently been completed. This is a very significant theme, in terms of whether we should adjust the age of protection in Ontario. I take that advice and the input from the CFSA very seriously, and I'll just say that it's under active consideration.

I'm guided by what is best for children and youth in this province. I'm guided by what our sector tells us, and we, I think, all agree that the welfare and protection of our children is important in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Back to the minister: Raising the age of protection was also a major request from contributors to the Child and Family Services Act review, which was completed earlier this year.

Minister, a solution is staring at us right from the order paper. With all-party support, we owe it to our vulnerable youth, who today face the real risk of homelessness, poor school performance or being forced out of school and becoming a victim of crime just to survive. Can Ontarians count on this government taking the necessary steps to ensure that Bill 54, the Right to Care Act, passes by this summer? Minister, it is the right thing to do.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I appreciate the question from the opposition. I take all good ideas that come forward that help protect and support our children who are at risk and who need protection. All ideas are welcome here.

We're taking a number of measures in our government to enhance child protection and welfare in Ontario. We are supporting our children's aid societies through continued investments. I know they're doing a great job locally as well, but I'm absolutely open to any other means that will enhance their care.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Pass the private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon, come to order.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Our province has pledged to receive 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of this year. When they arrive, they deserve the same high quality of health care that every Ontarian expects. But as you know, there are over—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Please finish.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: There are over 800,000 Ontarians without a family doctor, and at the same time, this government has cut over 50 residency spots. We will need each and every one of our doctors to help.

Mr. Speaker, will the government reverse their decision to cut residency positions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very surprised that the member opposite is asking this question in this particular way, given that his leader—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It goes both ways. Any comment from here on in is not acceptable.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that his leader was part of a government that cut the health care services for refugees. Our government subsequently picked up those costs; we paid those costs for refugees. And now the newly elected Liberal government is going to reverse that decision of the Conservatives and reinstate those supports for refugees.

I am thrilled that in our meetings yesterday in Ottawa, it was clear that the supports that used to be in place that were cut by the Conservative government are going to be reinstated for refugees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Based on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Syrians could be expected to present with communicable diseases, pregnancy, chronic diseases and mental health problems. Relationships with medical associations will be critical in meeting the health requirements for the provision of primary care. This province's doctors and nurses will be at the forefront, helping these new Ontarians settle, while at

the same time this government will slash the doctors' and nurses' fees.

Mr. Speaker, will this government stop their attack on doctors and will they help them treat the new Syrians in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just begin by saying that I am so proud of this province and I am proud of this country for opening our doors and being clear that we will take our responsibilities seriously to help out in this humanitarian crisis.

If the member opposite is saying that our doctors are not going to work with the refugees because they're not being paid enough, I really think that that is a shameful, shameful position to take and that is not what I know of Ontario doctors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: This government capped physician services to a 1.25% increase in the budget when the natural growth is 2.5%. That's mainly due to the 140,000 new patients every year and the baby boom population that's aging. This budget did not provide for such a sudden increase in residents.

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The Syrian refugees deserve the same health care as Ontarians. Will the government penalize the doctors wanting to help the Syrian refugees if the budget cap they set is exceeded?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care wants to answer this question so badly, but I really need to take the member on. The reality is, we're opening our doors to 10,000 refugees. We are doing our part as Ontarians; it's our moral responsibility. I'm proud of our country and I'm proud of the new Liberal government that is restoring the refugee health services that were cut by the previous Conservative government. If—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ahem.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have enormous faith that the health professionals in this province will step up and will be caring for the refugees who come here, as they have in the past. That is my understanding of who Ontario doctors are.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. One of the greatest challenges facing us today is climate change. In 2008, this Legislature voted in favour of a cap-and-trade system. We've waited eight years and, so far, there has been no real action.

I hope today's announcement will be different; however, any plan will be made weaker and less effective by the Premier's decision to sell off Hydro One. The Liberals are giving up one of our most powerful tools to drive conservation and to fight climate change.

Will Ontario's climate master plan explain why the Premier is putting corporate dividends ahead of clean air and action on climate change?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's a pretty convoluted argument. I welcome the leader of the third party to the party. I welcome her on board as we continue in our actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The reality is that the single most important initiative has been taken in this country, the initiative that the former Prime Minister inadvertently, without naming us, actually leaned on as he touted around the world the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of the country. That initiative was in Ontario—begun by my predecessor—to shut down the coal-fired plants. We have continued; those coal-fired plants are gone. That is the single most important initiative in North America in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I welcome the leader of the third party to this discussion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A privatized Hydro One has only one job: making money for its shareholders. The more energy people consume, the bigger the dividend cheques for their investors.

With Hydro One in private hands, the government loses another tool to help in the fight against climate change. That is a fact. Publicly owned utilities in British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec invest more in conservation, and consumers pay less in those provinces. Why is this Premier taking a step backward on conservation and climate change by selling off Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would ask the leader of the third party—perhaps she might want to look at what has happened in Alberta, where there is private distribution. She might want to look at what has happened in Alberta, where a significant decision was made by the NDP Premier of Alberta—who is part of the discussion at the Premiers' table and who will be going to Paris with me, with Premier Couillard, with other Premiers and with the Prime Minister to take a stand internationally. That is the stand of a progressive country moving on initiatives to reduce climate change, to fight climate change. That's what we're doing. That's the work that we're doing.

Yesterday, the legislation passed to ban coal-fired plants in the province permanently. I look forward to the announcement today that we are going to be making in terms of our climate change strategy. All of that is significant, and I hope that the leader of the third party will be supportive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It took the NDP Premier of Alberta, Rachel Notley, a whole six months to actually act on climate change in her province. The Liberals talked about it for eight years and we still don't have anything here in this province. Quebec, Manitoba and BC's public hydro agencies have among the lowest hydro rates in Canada—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Just forget the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy. Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They're the top three provinces for investing in conservation, with nearly twice the investment of Ontario. Selling Hydro One is going to mean even less investment in conservation.

It's time to do the right thing for the economy and for the environment and stop the sale of Hydro One. Will this Premier admit that selling Hydro One is the wrong decision for the environment in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the question demonstrates that, really, the context is not well understood by the leader of the third party. We started shutting down the coal-fired plants. In fact, we continued an initiative that had been begun years ago, and we have shut down those coal-fired plants. We've jump-started a renewable energy industry in this province. We've been doing that work all along.

It's fantastic that Rachel Notley has made the decision that she has made, but Alberta has a huge, huge hill to climb, so they need to get going, absolutely. We are on that road. We have taken initiative. We have made significant sacrifices in this province in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We will continue to do that, and we will put in place a cap-and-trade system that will foster innovation and will actually make our businesses more competitive. That's the track we're on, and we welcome the leader of the third party to join us.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. On page 5 of his report, Ontario's independent Financial Accountability Officer wrote that the net proceeds of the full 60% sale would be between \$1.4 billion to \$3.1 billion. Yet this government keeps claiming that selling Hydro One will put \$4 billion into transit.

But \$3.1 billion is less than \$4 billion, and \$1.4 billion is a lot less than \$4 billion. The Premier's numbers simply don't add up, and it is Ontario families that get stuck holding the bag. Will the Premier admit that her Hydro One math simply does not add up?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're on track to realize the \$9 billion that we are going to be investing, part of which is going to pay down debt and part of which we're going to invest in transportation and infrastructure. Now, the leader of the third party is saying there's not enough money to invest in transit and transportation. She needs to make up her mind: either she believes in those investments or she doesn't.

Our plan laid out clearly that in order to make those investments, we needed to leverage our existing assets to invest in new assets. That's what we are doing by broadening the ownership of Hydro One. Municipalities and communities across this province need investments in roads, in bridges and transit. They need investment in waste water systems. They need those investments in

order to be economically viable. Either she is onside with that or she's not, and clearly at this moment she's not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, \$1.4 billion is a mere 1% of this Premier's promises for infrastructure and transit investment. It is really barely scratching the surface. Everyone knows, however, that the sell-off of Hydro One is a lousy deal, and that this government is in total denial in that regard. The Minister of Finance said that the government has already put \$3 billion in the bank, but the truth is that the government is counting on billions of dollars that they simply cannot spend, that are not cash. Those are just numbers on a spreadsheet.

There's an old saying that you're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Will the Premier admit that her plan is based on billions of dollars that she cannot actually spend?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I play that expression back to the leader of the third party. The fact is that we have realized \$3 billion. We are on track to realize that \$4 billion, to be able to invest in transit and transportation and infrastructure.

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But the fact is that the opening gambit of the leader of the third party around climate change and around the importance of these investments now, the importance of taking the initiative right now in order to not just be able to go to Paris and stand with countries around the world, but, in fact, to actually make a difference—we have an opportunity as a country, as provinces and territories working with the federal government, to make a difference on this enormous challenge that is facing us. We're taking that responsibility, and part of that is investing in the transit that we know is needed in order to get people out of cars and get them onto public transportation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals insisted that selling off Hydro One would be a painless way to pay for transit, but here's the truth: The cold truth is that it's not really paying for transit, and everyone who pays an electricity bill is going to feel that pain. Families know it, businesses know it, the independent watchdogs of this province know it, municipal leaders know it and Liberal backbenchers know it. Everyone knows it. I expect the Premier knows it too. Why is she so stubbornly ignoring the facts despite the harm to Ontario's families and businesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the facts. The facts is that we're investing more in infrastructure than any government in Ontario's history. The facts is that, as we broadened the ownership of Hydro One, we were able—

Mr. John Yakabuski: "The facts is"? The facts are.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The facts is, there's an amendment before this House—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just say "are."

Hon. Charles Sousa: —yes—with the Trillium Trust that allows for non-cash items to be credited to the Trillium Trust. That will net \$3 billion into the Trillium Trust, to be reinvested in infrastructure. An additional \$1 billion will be used to pay down debt. That would never have happened had we not increased the valuation of Hydro One and broadened its ownership. We still own 84% of a much more valuable company than we did before.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, as you sold off Hydro One, you repeatedly told us that ratepayers would be protected by the Ontario Energy Board and that this would be a transparent process. But with Bill 135, which you've introduced to the Legislature, you're silencing the experts by putting all of the power in this minister's office. And with Bill 144, you've buried elements of the Hydro One sale in an omnibus bill that has 23 schedules that include electricity, liquor sales and horse racing. Is there a single tactic that this Premier won't resort to to hide the seedier elements of the Hydro One sale from the public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear, with the bill before this House, that we're increasing the understanding of how the Trillium Trust will enable us to reinvest and dedicate those funds to the trust to reinvest in infrastructure. That's what is happening here. Also, we're getting rid of the debt retirement charge nine months early, for the benefit of certainty and to allow those businesses to benefit from lower costs. That's what we're putting in this bill. It's all about helping the people of Ontario and the families of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Premier: The government has done everything possible to keep the behind-the-scenes details of the Hydro One sale out of the public eye. When they announced it, for goodness' sake, they had a big sign behind them that said, "Beer in grocery stores," at the same time that they were announcing the sell-off of Hydro One. There's a big, black curtain that exists over there, and it's time they came out from behind it.

When a woman in the Quinte region wanted the background correspondence from the Ministry of Energy about the sale, the government sent her a freedom-of-information request with a bill for \$7,100 attached to that. She could have gotten a better rate from a loan shark.

Is the Hydro One sale now so bad for ratepayers that even an FOI request to the government comes with a global adjustment attached to it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We had a prospectus. We had a draft prospectus. We had months of consultations with the public, and it was very detailed, explaining very clearly the Hydro One opportunity. Members of the opposition had the opportunity to review it, as did many others. In

fact, the market spoke: They gave a high value for Hydro One. We received the high end; we're on track to receive \$9 billion over the course of four years when we look at the way we provide for the broadening of that ownership. It's happening, and it's providing greater opportunity for us to reinvest into our communities.

We're also talking about merging the OLG with horse racing, something I think the opposition would like us to see. We're facilitating that in this bill as well, all of which is very detailed and enables us to provide for greater support to communities everywhere.

REFUGEES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's New Democrats are proud to stand with Ontarians and welcome Syrian refugees into the province. We believe Ontario should be an example for the world to follow. This begins with making sure that they start their lives here in Ontario with dignity. The province needs a concrete resettlement strategy, because a promise is simply not enough to build a life on.

My question is to the Premier. Where is your health plan? Where is your housing plan? Where is your jobs plan and your education plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, recently there has been lots of media coverage on the refugee issue—and lots of speculation, by the way. I want to thank Ontarians who are concerned and care about the coming of the Syrian refugees.

Today, the federal government will have a big announcement in terms of their logistics and also their updated plan. We are waiting for that announcement.

Having said that, Speaker, I want to let you know that Ontario has contributed \$10.5 million in helping the Syrian refugees, with \$2 million going directly to the United Nations and \$8.5 million to strengthen servicing and resettlement of the incoming refugees. So Ontario is committed with the 10,000 refugees we have committed to come to Ontario, and we will bring them over.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Premier. With winter quickly approaching and temperatures dropping, refugees need a warm place to live, money for food and winter clothes, and access to health care services. This government needs to come forward with a plan that ensures that they receive the adequate services they so desperately need.

Last week, I sent a letter to the Premier asking her to outline this plan. Will the Premier commit to creating a robust resettlement strategy for refugees and sharing it with myself and Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I refer to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the interest and support and advocacy from the third party on this important issue. I have to say, having been involved in refugee

issues all my professional life, I couldn't be prouder than I am today in terms of the outpouring of support from Ontarians to support the incoming refugees, to welcome them and to provide them with that safe and secure environment.

And they're right; the third party is correct that we have an important role to play as government in terms of preparations. We are well under way in developing our strategy on housing, on education, on health care, virtually every issue that's important to the incoming refugees and important to Ontarians.

I've been so impressed by the literally hundreds of Ontarians from every walk of life who have come forward to me and expressed their support, wanting to help, asking for ways that they can get personally involved. I'm confident not only in our strategy that we're developing together with the federal government, but I'm confident in Ontarians that this is going to be a huge success.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Many of my community members in Sudbury and across our province are troubled by reports of human trafficking taking place in our neighbourhoods. This is a practice that overwhelmingly targets women and girls and preys upon some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Last week, Ontario held its first Summit on Sexual Violence and Harassment, where presenters spoke about ending sexual violence and harassment and supporting survivors in the best and most appropriate ways possible. It is important that Ontarians know how serious we are about fighting all types of sexual violence and harassment in our province. It is also important that Ontarians see the strong actions that are being taken to fight human trafficking in our province.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what steps we are taking to stop this deplorable practice in our province?

1110

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for asking a very important question.

The member from Sudbury is absolutely right. Human trafficking is a disgraceful practice and there's no room for it anywhere in our communities.

It is essential that we collaborate between all levels of government, municipalities and police services to eliminate this practice, and this collaboration is already taking place. In October, a major investigation led by the OPP was responsible for rescuing 20 people, some as young as 14, who were thought to have been forced into the sex trade. This operation, known as Operation Northern Spotlight, brought together 350 officers and support staff from 40 police services, including the RCMP and the FBI.

Our government has also funded 11 projects totalling \$1.4 million through the proceeds of crime grant along-

side an additional \$200,000 of funding for police services from the ministry to fight human trafficking in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer.

It is certainly encouraging that the OPP led such an expansive and successful operation. I'm glad to hear that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is taking the issue so seriously.

But we also know that to tackle human trafficking, we need to see co-operation across ministries. Policing is an important element of our response to human trafficking, but we also need to see supports in social services and legal sectors as well.

Can the minister please inform the House of the work going on across government to address human trafficking?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is absolutely right. Human trafficking is a heinous crime. It's an issue I take very seriously as the Ontario minister responsible for women's issues.

There are a number of ministries working together collaboratively to combat human trafficking. In addition to the police measures that the minister mentioned, the Ontario Women's Directorate provides \$225,000 in funding to the White Ribbon Campaign to develop resources for young men in ending human trafficking and sexual violence. We're also providing over \$9 million to help victims of sexual violence across health care and legal and social services in more than 70 languages.

Last year, wearing my other hat as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, we funded a pilot project in York region to support youth involved in trafficking. Our Attorney General's ministry has crown attorneys with knowledge of human trafficking to advise on trafficking prosecutions and policies.

We take this kind of crime very seriously as a government. I'm looking forward to continuing this important work with all members of the Legislature.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Social housing providers recently renewed their insurance. For many of them, once again, the cost from Housing Services Corp. was far higher than if they were allowed to purchase the exact same insurance from another source.

The social housing providers are being forced to pay the Housing Service Corp. to be allowed to purchase the cheaper insurance because the minister refuses to let them opt out. Last year, there were 100 providers who paid the kickback to the HSC because he wouldn't let them opt out.

Could the minister tell us why he is forcing social housing providers to waste money that could otherwise be providing housing for people in need?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think the member opposite would be the ideal person to make any principled argument since it was his government that established the HSC and put in place the provision of pooling for insurance purposes.

The honourable member has risen in this House now 28 times to talk about the integrity of the Housing Services Corp. He fails to mention that we did an independent review. The review came back quite positively in as much as the HSC agreed to a number of provisions, including a revisit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's clear that the member opposite is going to go back in history and not acknowledge the good work that we've done to fix the problem that they set up in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: Perhaps he'll give me a different answer than the one he just gave that's 12 years told.

The minister may want to play off getting out of the provincial insurance trap fee as a pittance, but in Waterloo region we've now seen close to \$30,000 stripped from local housing. That's \$30,000 just for the privilege of choosing a better insurance deal than the province's Housing Services Corp. wants to force on them. That's \$30,000 that should be supporting housing for vulnerable families diverted straight to the pockets of the HSC. If the minister can't tell us why he allows this punitive practice to continue, can he tell us when we can expect the \$30,000 back to the Waterloo region?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The answer is a simple one, and it's one that the party opposite ingrained in their original legislation, and that's that the good of the many supersedes the good of the one. There are advantages to pooling—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: There are advantages to pooling, Mr. Speaker. I've had several meetings with service managers where we've raised the question of the Housing Services Corp. and asked them about our approach vis-à-vis the study and whether it's serving well. We have not heard the kinds of complaints that the member opposite is raising.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Today, we are once again joined by a group of this province's hard-working front-line correctional officers. The truth is, they have joined us many times over this past year, and that's because there's an ongoing crisis in corrections under this government's watch. Crumbling

infrastructure built through P3 arrangements, understaffing and overcrowding levels are dangerous for everyone living and working in our corrections system.

Ignoring a problem doesn't make it go away; ignoring a problem gives it the chance to grow and get worse. Other than tout its review, what tangibly is this government doing to fix the dire situation in our correctional facilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me start by thanking our corrections and probation and parole officers for the incredible work they do in our correctional institutions in our communities every single day. They are truly a front line to ensuring that our communities are safe at all times. In all my conversations that I've had with them—and the work that I've heard from members opposite as well—I think we all recognize that we need to collectively work to ensure that we're transforming our correctional services system, a system that moves away from just warehousing individuals and, most importantly, focuses on rehabilitating and reintegrating them better in the community.

One of the mandates that has been given to me by the Premier is to ensure that we do not address the issues around capacity in our jails by building more jails but in fact we deal with capacity by reducing the demand for jails. That is why the transformation of our system, in partnership with our correctional officers, is extremely important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As we've said, there is a crisis in corrections, and pretending that there isn't is not an acceptable strategy. Talking about rehabilitation and talking about the vision for the jails without ensuring that those things can happen—well, again, that's just talk.

This government is being asked what it's doing about the lack of mental health training for staff. It's being asked about malfunctioning locks and a worsening situation at the Toronto South Detention Centre and a hunger strike by inmates. It is being asked about multiple inmate deaths across the province. It is being asked why it is content to lock down facilities with inexperienced managers rather than reach a deal with its professional staff. Why is this government content to fiddle while our correctional system burns?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: There is a lot of work that has already started in partnership with our correctional staff in our system to ensure that we do that transformation. We are moving forward with better mental health supports and enhanced rehabilitation and reintegration programs so that we can help break the cycle of reoffending and build safer, stronger communities right across the province. That's why we have already hired 500 new correctional officers since 2013, and we're working hard to hire more. In fact, there are almost 100 new officers who are going through training at the correctional college as we speak.

1120

As part of our transformation, Speaker, we have also launched a comprehensive review of Ontario's use of segregation within our correctional facilities.

We have also begun construction of a 112-bed new regional intermittent centre at EMDC to ensure that we address the capacity issue, reduce contraband and improve safety of our correctional staff. I look forward to working with correctional staff on this.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. I understand that the Ontario public service was again recognized as one of Canada's top 100 employers for 2016 in a special section of the *Globe and Mail*. This is the second consecutive year that our public service has received this honour. I'd like to congratulate the dedicated men and women of the Ontario public service and thank them for the hard work that they do every day, providing us with the best advice in helping us deliver on our plans to build Ontario up.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell us more about the significance of this recognition for the Ontario public service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for this question and for recognizing the hard work and dedication of our extraordinary public service. I second her congratulations, and I'm sure everyone in this House joins me in congratulations to the OPS for this honour.

Our public service is second to none. They are dedicated, they are talented, and they are committed to delivering the best possible government for the people of Ontario. As the member notes, the Ontario public service was again recognized as one of Canada's top employers for 2016, making this the sixth time that the OPS has received this recognition.

Our public service has also been recognized as one of the greater Toronto area's top employers for the past seven years in a row, one of Canada's greenest employers for six years in a row, and one of Canada's best diversity employers for eight years in a row. Speaker, this recognition is important as it helps us attract and retain the very best.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Speaker, as someone who has had the great pleasure of working with our public service, I wholeheartedly agree that this recognition is well earned. We rely on their advice, their professionalism and expertise to help us make Ontario the best place to live, work and do business. They're absolutely instrumental in the development and delivery of programs and services to the people of this province. It's wonderful to hear that our public service continues to be recognized as a top employer in a number of categories, and that the Ontario public service is seen as a leading employer.

I hope that the minister can tell us more about why the Ontario public service continues to be selected as a top

employer and what our government is doing to maintain our status as a leading employer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as Secretary of Cabinet Steve Orsini said recently, this recognition is a testament to the hard work of our public service each and every day, and it's a testament to the hard work that's been done to make the OPS a great place to work.

Ontario is a leader when it comes to inclusive, accessible, respectful, healthy and productive workplaces. For example, we have strong employee networks like the OPS Pride Network, which provides support to employees on LGBTQ issues, and Tomorrow's Ontario Public Service, or TOPS, which is fostering future leaders.

The OPS will continue to lead by example and set a high standard for other employers to emulate, but we need to work hard to stay in the top tier of employers. That's why we've released a new HR plan for the next five years focused on fostering a positive and inclusive workplace culture, developing engaged and innovative leaders, and implementing effective and fair HR practices.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is to the Premier. On November 4, I wrote to the Premier to ask that she take a leadership role by advocating for the proposed expansion at Billy Bishop airport here in Toronto. As you know, it is estimated that the proposal will create 2,000 new, well-paying jobs. Many of these jobs will be at the iconic Canadian company Bombardier, including jobs here in Toronto at Bombardier Downsview, which recently had to lay off 500 workers.

The Premier's support for this project would send an important signal to the federal government and would be the kind of leadership that Ontario desperately needs.

Speaker, will the Premier take the opportunity here this morning to stand up for Ontario's workers and clear the air by declaring her support for this important proposal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from across the way for the question. It's the exact same question that he asked here in the Legislature only a few days ago, Speaker. The answer today remains the same as it was then, which is that, as it relates to this particular issue, it's a matter between the federal government, the city of Toronto and the Toronto Port Authority. I understand that those are the authorities that are taking care of this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: There are 2,000 jobs at stake, and all this Premier wants to do is continue to pass the buck.

Speaker, back to the Premier: In 2013, Porter Airlines signed a \$2-billion deal with Bombardier to buy up to 30 CS100 planes. Those planes would allow the airline to fly passengers to destinations as far as Vancouver, Los Angeles and the Caribbean while also increasing services to locations throughout both southern and northern

Ontario. This proposal will create 2,000 well-paying jobs while generating more than \$250 million in annual economic impact for the city of Toronto, but this Premier won't even add her voice to support it.

The Premier knows that there's a \$2-billion deal, thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions in annual economic activity all at risk. Speaker, will this Premier stand up for the workers at Bombardier and declare her support for this important proposal today?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again I thank the member for the supplementary question. This is essentially a repeat of what we said the last time we had this back and forth on this issue.

What's interesting to me, in particular, is that the member opposite is talking about the potential for job creation. Speaker, I'm not sure if that member or the leader of his party or his caucus understands that, with the infrastructure investments that our Premier and our government are making across Ontario, we will create or sustain 110,000 jobs each and every single year.

What's fascinating, I know, for the people of Toronto, for the people of the GTHA and for the people of Ontario is that, with our plan to create over 100,000 jobs annually with infrastructure investments, that member and that party on the Conservative benches continuously vote against and oppose our plan to move the province forward. So there's something that's a little bit off here, Speaker. He asks questions about job creation and he rejects our efforts to build the province up and move Ontario forward.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Liberal government reintroduced a 2014 Conservative bill that the Premier herself voted against just last year. Essentially, this government is giving well-connected Liberal insiders an early Christmas present by releasing corporate construction giant and major Liberal donor EllisDon from its 60-year-old obligation to hire unionized workers. Speaker, why is this government putting well-connected insiders and friends ahead of hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the member opposite for the question again. What the member will understand is that there was a private member's bill before the House that would do what the courts were asking the Legislature to do, and that was to act on this issue.

If you'll recall, the first bill that was before this House would have given everything that one side wanted and nothing to the building trades union. What I asked these groups to do, as a result of this coming back again from the courts, was to sit in the same room, spend a weekend together and see if they can reach a settlement to resolve this long-standing issue.

They were able to reach a settlement within that room. One of the parties was able to ratify that agreement; the other wasn't. What we're doing today, what we're asking the House to do, is to pass the legislation that gives us a

vehicle to implement a regulation based primarily on what the arbitrator is asking us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, hard-working Ontarians know full well that this has got nothing to do with a fair settlement, as the minister claims. Despite numerous court decisions upholding EllisDon's obligations, despite tools available to solve labour disputes, we know full well that this is about thanking the Liberal Party's highest donor, building on great relationships between cabinet members and their insider friends. This is about a Liberal government interfering in workers' democratic right to negotiate a fair deal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock.

I'm listening very carefully, and you're tiptoeing so tight. I'm going to have to warn the member not to get into an accusation that I know you know is unparliamentary. Carry on and finish. I'm listening carefully to that.

1130

Ms. Cindy Forster: This is about the Liberal government interfering in the workers' democratic right to negotiate a fair deal with a private corporation.

Will the Premier do the right thing and remove this section of the bill and put Ontarians ahead of corporate donors?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks again to the member for the question. What we have, specifically, is each and every one of those—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sir, I'm going to ask you to leave, please. We cannot have people participate in House business—observation only. Thank you.

Please finish.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The fact is that the building trades unions retain every one of their rights in the province of Ontario. What we did is we brought in, I think, one of the best mediators, one of the best arbitrators in this country, and sat down with these parties. They reached an agreement on that weekend; one party was able to ratify, the other party was not.

The arbitrator, Kevin Burkett, has come back to me; he said that what we should be doing is we should be framing the regulation to resolve this dispute based primarily on the agreement that was reached on that weekend. I'm suggesting that's the best way forward. It's a way forward that I think protects the interests of both parties in this regard.

VETERANS

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Every November, we come together as a nation to recognize the sacrifices made by our veterans. Last year, while attending a community tree-planting event in Oshawa, as part of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry's partnership with Trees Ontario under the 50 Million Tree Program, I was approached by Forests Ontario with a wonderful idea, one that would create a unique and lasting tribute to Canada's

fallen soldiers, a tribute that would allow all Ontarians the opportunity to commemorate these veterans every day of the year in perpetuity via a living legacy.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House about this initiative and our partnership with Forests Ontario?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Burlington for the question and also for her tremendous leadership on this very important issue.

In 2007, as everyone in this chamber will know, the Ontario government dedicated the segment of Highway 401 between Glen Miller Road in Trenton and Keele Street in Toronto as the Highway of Heroes. This dedication was a fitting way of commemorating the bravery and sacrifice of Canadian soldiers whose lives have been tragically cut short in defence of our country.

I was extremely proud to join the member from Burlington to announce that our government has formalized a partnership with Forests Ontario to move forward with the Highway of Heroes tree-planting partnership. This partnership will see 117,000 trees planted along the Highway of Heroes—one tree for every soldier who has died serving Canada since Confederation. The formal tree planting will begin in the spring of 2016, and this wonderful initiative will stand forever as a living memorial to those who have proudly served our country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the minister for his response.

I was incredibly proud to stand with him to announce our government's partnership with Forests Ontario for the Highway of Heroes tree-planting initiative. I join him in thanking them and, in particular, Mark Cullen for his passion and commitment not only to this program but to our veterans.

I'm also pleased to note that this is not the first investment that our government has made for our veterans. This past summer, our government announced a new initiative that seeks to help military personnel in making a transition to civilian work and life.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House more about this important new initiative?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member from Burlington for the supplementary question.

She is right. This past June, I had the honour of standing with the representatives from the Department of National Defence, the organization known as Helmets to Hardhats and the Ontario Trucking Association to make an important announcement. As of this past July 1, our government is making it easier for Canadian military personnel and veterans by allowing them to exchange their Department of National Defence 404 driver's permits for an applicable Ontario licence. Extensive review of DND's licensing standards have shown us that military training and testing requirements meet Ontario's licence standards. Taking this important step will help those leaving the military transition to civilian work and assist them in finding jobs in the trucking sector. While Ontario will waive knowledge and road tests, we will still require

applicants to complete a vision test, meet medical standards and satisfy identification requirements.

I am very proud to be a member of a government that stands up for, defends and helps those who serve our country.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Education. As the minister knows, for a number of years people in Wasaga Beach have wondered when they will get a high school. We think we have enough local students to justify the building of a high school.

I ask the minister to tell this House: Who is it that makes that decision, and has the Simcoe County District School Board ever asked the minister to build a high school in Wasaga Beach?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to talk about our capital priorities program. We just recently announced funding for 56 capital projects totalling almost half a billion dollars.

I can confirm that the Simcoe County District School Board did not submit a request for a new high school in Wasaga Beach to our capital priorities program. In fact, I can confirm that none of the four boards that serve Wasaga Beach—that would be Simcoe county, Simcoe Muskoka, Viamonde and Centre-Sud—submitted a request for a school in Wasaga Beach. Although we did get 220 requests for \$2.7 billion, I don't fund projects if I don't get a request.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Minister of Education: I keep getting told that one reason the school board is reluctant to ask for a high school in Wasaga Beach is that it might jeopardize the viability of Stayner Collegiate and/or Collingwood Collegiate.

Can the minister tell us if that is true? Will Stayner and Collingwood be affected? And what does the minister say to those of us who truly believe we have a good case for a high school in Wasaga Beach?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Obviously, given that the case wasn't submitted, I can't comment on its impact on other schools, but what I can share with the member is that one of the 56 projects that was successful was Simcoe county's request for a school in Elmvale. As the member opposite knows, Elmvale is 15 kilometres down the road from Wasaga Beach and, in fact, does serve the students from Wasaga Beach.

We did approve the request for construction of an addition to Elmvale District High School. We approved a 180-pupil-place addition, with funding of \$5.5 million. The students who reside in Wasaga Beach will be well served by that updated high school in Elmvale.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. This week, we learned that poverty and homelessness continue to grow in northern Ontario. This Liberal government's rhetoric and record on homelessness and poverty simply do not match up.

In Sudbury, the homeless population has more than doubled since 2009. Shockingly, almost 1% of Sudbury's population is homeless. Rates of homelessness and poverty in North Bay and Timmins are higher than the rest of Canada. This government is failing vulnerable people, families and children in northern Ontario.

Will this Premier admit that her government's inaction is forcing marginalized people in northern Ontario to pay the price?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you so much for the question. As I hope the member realizes, I recently co-chaired an expert panel on homelessness with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to actually make our commitment to end homelessness in Ontario a reality.

We have now developed the strategy; we know what we have to do. We absolutely did hear loud and clear in those panel meetings about the diversity of homelessness and the diversity of poverty across the province. We know that solutions that might work in large urban centres will not work in rural centres; that the north is way different from the south. Working with our partners across all levels of government and beyond—the not-for-profit sector and the business community—we will end chronic homelessness within 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Back to the Premier: The numbers speak for themselves. While indigenous people only represent about 8.2% of the population in Sudbury, they represent about 43% of the homeless population. More than half of people at risk of homelessness have mental or physical health problems. Some 182 homeless people in Sudbury are children under the age of 18.

The Premier must acknowledge that this is unacceptable. This government's neglect of vulnerable people in northern Ontario is atrocious. Speaker, will the Premier admit that she is failing families and children in northern Ontario and tell us what her government is doing about it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the tone of the question is confrontational, but in fact the substance of the question is completely aligned with our work on this. We have identified four population groups that we are focusing on first when it comes to homelessness. We are talking about youth, aboriginal people, people who are chronically homeless—that means they've been homeless for six months or longer—and, very importantly, people who are transitioning from government organizations or institutions like the children's aid society. We don't think anyone should leave one part of provincial care into homelessness.

There's a lot of work ahead of us. I'm counting on the third party to support us as we do this hard work.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. MaRS is recognized as one of the world's largest innov-

ation hubs, with a 1.5-million-square-foot complex located in the heart of Canada's research cluster in downtown Toronto. MaRS equips innovators and organizations with entrepreneurship skills to compete in the 21st century.

Recently, we saw stellar tenants moving into the MaRS west tower. Over 1,000 start-up companies have been incubated or advised at the MaRS west tower just down the street here.

In September, there were two exciting announcements at MaRS. On September 3, we celebrated a whole roster of innovative companies and organizations that would be collaborating in MaRS. On September 8, we welcomed JLABS, with their very first incubator outside the United States.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please update the House on the latest exciting MaRS announcement from last week?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for her question and for her observations. Time is winding down here. I think this is a really important question, so I think the member should probably ask it at another time, when I can give a more fulsome answer.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the member opposite is getting hungry; that's why he's getting ornery. So I'm going to be really tight in my answer.

The announcement last week that Autodesk will be opening one of its biggest R&D centres at MaRS here in Ontario is not just good news, it's a milestone that I believe marks a huge victory for the MaRS west tower project. I'm pleased to be able to inform the member today that the MaRS tower 2 project is now 84% leased, well on the way to being fully leased.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask the member to re-ask this question at a later date, and we'll give the member opposite a more fulsome answer.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo on a point of order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to correct my record. Yesterday, during the debate on Bill 144, Budget Measures Act, 2015, I said that all Liberal members voted against the EllisDon bill, Bill 74, in 2013. In fact, there were two Liberal members who voted in favour of the EllisDon bill.

VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wanted to welcome to the House Arijana Haramincic, executive director of Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County, and David Studham, a member of the board, who have joined us for question period here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the minister for opening a door that I had closed for quite some time during question period.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the members' gallery Jason Woycheshyn, from the Ukrainian Canadian Professional and Business Association, and Roma Dzerowicz, with the Holodomor National Awareness Tour. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLODOMOR

Mr. John Yakabuski: Today, I would like to begin with a quote from Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations: "A genocide begins with the killing of one person not because of what he has done, but because of who he is."

As we begin National Holodomor Awareness Week, I rise to remember the victims of the terrible famine in Ukraine, in which millions of people were starved to death in 1932 and 1933.

"Holodomor" means murder by starvation. This intentional and targeted genocide of the Ukrainian people, which took the lives of an estimated 2.5 million to 7.5 million people, many of whom were children, was perpetrated by the Communist dictator Joseph Stalin to punish Ukrainians for resisting Soviet rule. Soviet authorities confiscated all food grown by the Ukrainian farmers. Although the harvest was rich, the Ukrainian people were forbidden to touch it. Anyone, including children, caught taking even a stalk could be executed.

Special brigades searched homes and forcibly took all food from Ukrainian people, ensuring a mass famine would ensue. While millions were dying of starvation, the Soviets took the wheat the Ukrainians had produced and sold it abroad.

This genocidal famine was denied, ignored and covered up throughout the 20th century. Today, the Russian government continues to deny that the Holodomor was a genocide.

In the days ahead many events will be held across Canada to commemorate the Holodomor. I will be honoured to attend one such commemoration this Saturday in Mississauga, organized by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, together with PC Leader Patrick Brown.

By commemorating the victims of the Holodomor, we remind Ontarians that we share a responsibility to ensure that similar atrocities never happen again. This week, I join all Ontarians, particularly Ontarians and Canadians of Ukrainian origin, in solemnly marking the anniversary of this crime against humanity.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Miss Monique Taylor: Today is Hamilton Day at Queen's Park. I grew up in the east end of Hamilton, home to the steel works. For many it was a hard life. But people worked hard and many were able to forge a good future for their families.

Those who worked in the steel mills knew it wasn't paradise. They recognized the dangers of working there. It wasn't necessarily the future that they wanted for their kids, so they made plans. They put money away for their kids' education. Instead of asking for big raises, they negotiated decent pensions and health benefits for when they retired. Although the work was hard and dangerous, they were comforted that they had made the best of it to secure a decent life ahead for them and their families.

Later in life, I moved up onto the mountain, an area of the city that I share with the highest proportion of steel retirees in the city. They are my neighbours and my friends. Their dream has turned into a nightmare. US Steel has reneged on agreements that it made years ago. Through decades of service, the workers fulfilled their part of the deal, but US Steel feels no obligation to fulfill its end of it. Health benefits have stopped with no notice, and people are worried about their pensions.

The government committed \$3 million to a transitional fund for health benefits, but nobody knows where it is and how to access it. I urge the government, Speaker, to confirm the process immediately and allow people this badly needed funding.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize three remarkable women from L'Amoreaux Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt who have contributed significantly to a stronger, more positive and compassionate Ontario.

First, I would like to recognize educator Michelle Forde, who has been a teacher at L'Amoreaux Collegiate for the past eight years. Ms. Forde views the classroom as a communal space where she and her students learn together. At L'Amoreaux Collegiate, Ms. Forde and her students have received two grants, one for funding a students wellness centre and another to bring yoga to their school to further manage stress and promote physical activity.

Ms. Forde oversees the Equity Club, a student-led committee that focuses on educating the student population about social justice. For her outstanding contribution at L'Amoreaux school, Ms. Forde received an honourable mention in the Toronto Star Teacher of the Year Award this year.

I would also like to recognize two students from L'Amoreaux Collegiate: 14-year-old twins Maryam and Nivaal Rehman. Earlier this year, Maryam and Nivaal received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award for their outstanding work in promoting education and opportunity in Pakistan. They have visited Pakistan on several occasions, meeting with students from some of the poorest neighbourhoods to speak with them about the power of education and learn about their struggles.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Maryam and Nivaal, as well as Ms. Forde, for their contributions to the L'Amoreaux community.

HANNAH FLINN

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to recognize Cadet Corporal Hannah Fynn of the 113 The Brockville Rifles Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps. Hannah is from Jasper in my riding and next week will receive the Cadet Medal of Bravery in a ceremony at the Brockville Armouries. It's the Canadian cadet organization's highest honour. It is awarded to a cadet who performs an outstanding deed of valour in risking their life to save someone else.

Hannah was recommended for this prestigious honour for her incredible bravery and selfless actions following a crash while travelling in a van with six family members. She suffered severe injuries when the van collided with a tractor-trailer in April, but this remarkable 14-year-old's response in the aftermath reflected the courage and the character exemplified by the cadet program. With the van toppled on its side, Hannah freed herself and moved about inside, reassuring her injured siblings. As motorists arrived, Hannah passed her siblings into their care, but her elder sister Sarah remained trapped upside down. After unbuckling her, Hannah stayed with Sarah until paramedics arrived.

Emergency crews could not initially reach them, so Hannah held an oxygen mask on her sister for 30 minutes until they were extracted.

I regret that I am unable to attend next week's ceremony due to my duties in the House, but I ask everyone to join me in recognizing this outstanding young person. In our own moment of crisis, we should all aspire to summon the same courage that Hannah showed to put the well-being of others ahead of her own. What an outstanding role model, and we're so proud in Leeds-Grenville to call Cadet Corporal Hannah Fynn one of our own.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The discussion of climate change is becoming increasingly a part of debate and discourse in this chamber. Today, I attended a press conference held by the Premier and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to speak about the most recent announcement of a climate change plan. Effectively, today, we had the reannouncement of a pending announcement. The "high-level climate plan" that was introduced today had no costs, no targets by sector or details of implementation. That was disturbing enough.

But more disturbing was the apparent burial of the 2020 climate targets. The whole focus, in the 40 pages of documentation that was produced, mentioned the 2020 targets once. The discussion was about the 2030 targets and the 2050 targets. I went through this with the run-up to Kyoto in 2012: the fact that governments wanted to move targets far enough away that they never really would be something that mattered in their term of office.

Speaker, you understand, and the members in this chamber understand, the seriousness of the crisis that we face on this planet, in this society. To fail to meet the 2020 targets is a very significant matter. This government

will be judged by its ability, or its failure, to meet targets that it has set.

1510

DAN PRENDERGAST

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like to remember today an incredible teacher, father and basketball coach—probably the best basketball coach in Canada for decades—Mr. Dan Prendergast. Dan was born in London, Ontario, the youngest of eight children. He came to St. Mike's, where he taught, coached and counselled young men for over 50 years.

He just died recently after a long battle with cancer, but Dan will be remembered for his incredible love of teaching and of coaching. He basically made basketball what it is in Toronto today. I know today we hear about the Raptors and their great fan following.

Dan built basketball up with his basketball clinics, with his coaching, with his powerhouse team the Blue Raiders at St. Mike's. He coached the likes of Leo Rautins, who went on to Syracuse University and received a scholarship there, and then was the first-round draft choice of the 76ers. So Leo, who is now an analyst with the Raptors, knows what a great man and coach Dan Prendergast was.

We say goodbye to Dan and also his late wife Sharon Marie Flanagan. He is survived by his daughters Erin and Kelly, and sons Daniel and Ryan who attended St. Mike's.

Goodbye, Dan. You were one of the best.

DIABETES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: As many of us know, November is Diabetes Awareness Month. During the month, we reflect on this prevalent chronic condition and how it affects many Ontarians throughout the province.

Over 1.5 million Ontarians, or 10.2% of our population, suffer from diabetes. By 2025, that number is expected to rise to 2.3 million Ontarians or 13.4% of the province's population. With proper knowledge and treatment, many of those afflicted with diabetes can lead healthy lives. Until a cure is discovered, preventing the onset of negative health effects due to diabetes is key.

All diabetics should follow and know the ABCs of care. A is for A1C: Knowing your A1C allows you to know the average blood sugar level over the last few months. B is for blood pressure: Blood pressure control is just as important as blood sugar control. High blood pressure increases the risks of heart failure, stroke and kidney disease of diabetics. C is for cholesterol: It's important to keep cholesterol levels in check because high cholesterol levels can also lead to a higher instance of heart attack and stroke.

Diabetics in this province must know that they are eligible for coverage of routine eye examinations so that they can be monitored for any retinopathy that may

occur. Diabetics are also prone to kidney disease, as well as neuropathy.

Diabetes Awareness Month reminds us to make the necessary lifestyle modifications, such as healthy food choices, being active, stopping smoking and losing weight to help prevent the onset of diabetes.

I'd like to thank all those involved with the Canadian Diabetes Association and all of the volunteers who work hard to advocate and help those with diabetes throughout our province.

HIGHWAY OF HEROES TRIBUTE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: On November 6, I, together with the Minister of Transportation, the MPP and the MP for York Centre, attended the launch of the Highway of Heroes living tribute at the Forensic Services and Coroner's Complex in Downsview, the beginning of the Highway of Heroes. On the same day, the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West attended a similar ceremony with the base commander and staff at CFB Trenton at the highway's end.

The tribute will plant one tree along the Highway of Heroes for every fallen Canadian soldier, 117,000 in all. How fitting that we honour and remember our fallen heroes with a living legacy along this highway, symbolically bringing them back to the land they died to defend.

This project was first brought to my attention in the fall of 2014 by Mark Cullen. I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Mark at a community tree-planting event in Oshawa, organized by Trees Ontario, as part of our government's 50 Million Tree Program. Mark's obvious passion for the Highway of Heroes living tribute had me engaged from the beginning, and we worked together alongside a number of partners over the past year.

Mark established the living tribute website and partnership, and worked with stakeholders including the MTO. I'd like to thank him and his executive director, Scott Bryk, for their dedication to this project.

I'd also like to thank everyone who so diligently worked to get this project where it is today, especially our partners at Trees Ontario and Trees for Life. I know that all Ontarians will be proud of this wonderful initiative.

Indeed, I know too that generations of Canadians may one day bask in the shade of these beautiful trees, a legacy to our veterans. As they travel along the Highway of Heroes, I hope they will feel a deeper connection to every single one of our fallen heroes.

DIABETES

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Diabetes is a serious condition that affects more than 10 million Canadians, including 1.5 million Ontarians, and costs approximately \$14 billion and rising to Canadians annually. In 10 years, the number of Ontarians living with diabetes is expected to increase to 2.3 million.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is helping those affected to live healthier lives, preventing the onset and consequences of diabetes, and discovering a cure. The association has called for increased public awareness regarding OHIP-insured yearly eye exams for adults living with diabetes and increased access to offloading devices to help treat diabetic foot ulcers and reduce the risk of amputation in people living with the disease. As a nurse who has cared for many diabetic patients, I understand the value of these programs.

Our government supports those living with diabetes through many initiatives. Ontario is the first province to introduce a publicly funded pediatric insulin pump program, in 2006. It expanded to adults in 2008, when we introduced the Ontario Diabetes Strategy that supports diabetes prevention, care and management across the province.

Recently, I visited the pediatric diabetes clinic at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital in my riding. Nancy Easton, a certified diabetes educator, informed me that they have a team of medical and social service professionals to help maintain the health and wellness of these children and their families to prevent possible complications of diabetes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 24, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on the Smart Metering Initiative, section 3.11 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Smart Metering Initiative, section 3.11 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Lisa MacLeod, Han Dong, John Fraser, Percy Hatfield, Harinder Malhi, Julia Munro, Arthur Potts and Lou Rinaldi.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Energy, Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board for their attendance at the hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the auditor, the Clerk of the Committee and staff in the Legislative Research Service.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur les redevances d'aménagement et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (FIREFIGHTER BENEFITS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (PRESTATIONS DES POMPIERS)

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighter benefits / Projet de loi 147, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les

accidents du travail en ce qui concerne les prestations des pompiers.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I introduced the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Firefighter Benefits), 2015, to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters entitled to benefits under the insurance plan because of an occupational disease that may have occurred as a result of concurrent employment by one or more schedule 1 employers and one or more schedule 2 employers.

The act would further prohibit the board from determining that an employer is a firefighter's employer for the purposes of the insurance plan solely based on the fact that the firefighter's last exposure to the substance that may have caused the occupational disease occurred while working for that employer.

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE SENIORS IN THE COMMUNITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES VULNÉRABLES DANS LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Soo Wong: The Protection of Vulnerable Seniors in the Community Act, 2015, amends the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

The Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 is amended to require regulated health professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a senior is being abused or neglected. The Public Guardian and Trustee is required to investigate the report to determine whether an application for temporary guardianship is required.

This requirement applies even if the information that is required to be disclosed is confidential or privileged, unless the information is subject to solicitor-client privilege. No proceeding may be commenced against a regulated health professional for making a report in good faith. The intimidation, dismissal or penalization of regulated health professionals who make a report is prohibi-

ed. Coercion or intimidation of a regulated health professional who makes a report is also prohibited. In addition, authorizing, permitting or concurring in a contravention of the requirement to make a report is prohibited.

The Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 is amended to make it an act of professional misconduct for a regulated health professional to fail to report reasonable suspicion that a senior is being abused or neglected as required by the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

It's signed by, actually, hundreds of people from my riding. I'll hand it to page Rachael.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition from London, St. Thomas, St. Williams, St. Marys, Dorchester, Parkhill and Windsor.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully agree, will affix my name and give it to Prasanna to take up to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

“Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

“Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

“Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to Michelle to bring to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I totally support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the desk with Hannah.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Hydro One Not for Sale.” It reads:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Ross to take to the table.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, I would like to bring to the House this petition to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect gender identity and gender expression.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protection of human rights is a fundamental Canadian value;

“Whereas discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression is a violation of human rights; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has passed and enacted Bill 33, Toby’s Act (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity or Gender Expression), 2012;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encourage the government of Canada to pass and enact Bill C-279, An Act to Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity)—without any amendments.”

It gives me great pleasure to put my signature to this petition and give it to page Benjamin.

1530

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy and eligibility:

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

“Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;”

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

It was brought to me by Reverend Paul Grassie and Jim McEwen from my riding.

POET LAUREATE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas poets laureate have been officially recognized at all levels of Canadian government and in at least 15 countries around the world; and

"Whereas the establishment of our own poet laureate for the province of Ontario would promote literacy and celebrate Ontario culture and heritage, along with raising public awareness of poetry and of the spoken word; and

"Whereas the member from Windsor-Tecumseh has introduced private member's Bill 71 to establish the Office of Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario as a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy, to focus attention on our amazing poets and to give new focus to the arts community in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the establishment of the Office of Poet Laureate as an officer of the Ontario Legislature and that private member's Bill 71, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I fully support this petition and the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, and will sign this and send it to the Clerks' desk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means

of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific" value;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries ... of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'll join the signatories here, mostly from Brampton, to affix my own signature and send it down via page Hannah.

HYPERBARIC THERAPY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hyperbaric medicine has been proven to prevent unnecessary limb amputations, improving the quality of life of thousands of Ontarians;

"Whereas hyperbaric medicine has been proven effective to treat 14 medical conditions, including: chronic non-healing diabetic wounds, decompression sickness, air embolisms, carbon monoxide poisoning, gas gangrene, flesh-eating disease, compromised skin grafts, bone infections, radiation injuries and burns;

"Whereas diabetic non-healing wounds are the number one cause of limb amputation in Ontario;

"Whereas hyperbaric medicine has prevented hundreds of amputations, which in the short term cost \$65,000 per patient, and long-term cost \$350,000 per patient and have added up to hundreds of millions of dollars over the years;

"Whereas amputation of a limb greatly diminishes the quality and length of life of patients, something we cannot put a price on;

"Whereas there are only limited facilities in Ontario that provide hyperbaric oxygen therapy necessary to treat diabetic wounds that prevent unnecessary amputations;

"Whereas the government of Quebec funds hyperbaric medicine for the treatment of chronic non-healing wounds in that province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as follows:

"(1) To recognize the existing and scientifically sound studies in the US, Europe, Japan, the UK, Australia and Asia which clearly show that hyperbaric oxygen therapy is effective especially in treating of diabetic wounds and ulcers;

"(2) To provide stable funding for the technical and professional costs of providing hyperbaric oxygen therapy, for doctors, medical staff and technicians, for existing and future facilities;

"(3) To increase the number of hyperbaric oxygen therapy centres across Ontario to prevent unnecessary suffering, economic loss and loss of quality and length of life."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Jack.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition signed by people from London, Toronto, Aurora, Welland, Kitchener and Whitby.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

"Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

"Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

"Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

"Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry's goal of increasing employment and the provincial government's poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government's plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit."

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Lauren to bring up to the front.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It is my turn to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. I'm going to share my time with two of my lakefront colleagues: one from Northumberland–Quinte West, the beautiful member from Brighton, and also the member from St. Catharines, the beautiful member from Dalhousie.

1540

I will talk about this bill in practical terms. This is part of a budgetary process—a very complex one, given the billions of dollars involved in budgets in Ontario, Canada's largest province.

The reality of this budget is that it enables the implementation of a lot of essential bridges, roads, subways, hospitals and sewers. My riding is right in the middle of probably the largest construction project taking place in Canada right now. We are building a subway line from the west end of Toronto, near Black Creek and Eglinton, all the way through the middle of Toronto, all the way out to Scarborough. Most of it is underground. Right now, the tunnels have been dug from Black Creek to Bathurst Street and now they're doing the tunnels from Yonge Street west. These tunnels are being built by massive tunnel-boring machines. To pay for this kind of construction, you need this type of budgetary support.

By the way, these tunnel-boring machines were developed by a local Toronto person called Richard Lovat. He was a genius in building equipment for mining and for sewers. He developed these two massive tunnel-boring machines years ago, and now they're used all over the world.

These tunnel-boring machines operate in shafts about the size of this room here. The tunnel-boring machines go right underneath the street as the street is operating, buildings are operating, and people are taking buses and cars to work. If you ever drive—sometimes I tell people to avoid the area of Allen Road and Eglinton, if you don't want to see traffic gridlock in action. Anyway, they're still working as they're building the subway and the road is still open.

This is the type of investment that is being made through Bill 144.

The thing that we forget is that this type of investment is not only for the tens of thousands of jobs that are going on right now in building these massive tunnels for the subway, but these jobs will go on for the next 10 years. They're very good-paying jobs, very skilled; incredible technology. In fact, earlier this spring these two tunnel-boring machines were lifted out of the ground by these giant cranes and were then rolled across Allen Road by a company that came, I think, out of Guelph.

The expertise we have in construction in Ontario is second to none. We've got men and women who can build anything and build it well. That is one kind of investment we're making with this budget bill, in these men and women and in the jobs that keep the economy active and keep the economy engaging people.

When we talk about the economy, we talk essentially about the macroeconomics of it, but the microeconomics is that when people are building roads, building hospitals, building subways, they're putting food on the table and they're giving opportunity to small companies, to big companies, to young men and women who are just starting as apprentices in the construction trade, and to the veteran skilled labour that's there.

Also, in these construction projects it's amazing to see that half of the employees now actually work on computers in these temporary workplaces. They're the ones doing all the design work, all the scheduling. All these young men and women, who probably have never touched a shovel or done anything with lumber or steel, are basically the backbone of the construction projects now.

They just finished building a hospital just outside my ward, the Humber River Hospital. It's the world's first totally digital hospital. If you are in that hospital and you want to order your meal, they give you a touch screen and they give you a picture of what you want to eat. You punch in that picture, and before you know it, in half an hour, you've got your hot chicken soup or your roast beef. This is Humber River Hospital. If you get a chance, Mr. Speaker, visit that site. It is an incredible hospital. Most of the rooms are private, with the best technology, and it's going to employ over 8,000 people. That is at Wilson and Keele. It's the old Ministry of Transportation site.

When we talk about the paper before us, Bill 144, we have to relate it to the real-life investments that are being made across this province, which means that there are jobs, improved services, improved health care in the case of the new hospital, and better public transportation, as we see in the case of the Eglinton subway, which is being built.

These projects are not built on a simple order of the government. They sometimes take months and years to come to reality. The Eglinton subway was actually started back in the 1980s. In fact, they had dug most of the hole for the Eglinton subway; the tunnels were built back in the early 1990s. But we had a difference of

opinion with the new government that was elected. They decided not to proceed with the subway; I think it was in 1996 that they stopped the construction. Now we're back at building it again in the year 2015.

These construction projects don't turn around quickly. It takes a lot of years of environmental assessment, in terms of signing contracts and in getting approvals from local councils and the Ministry of the Environment. You just can't turn the construction tap on and off. It takes a lot of long-term planning and processes that cost a lot of money.

I would say that one of the things that is very good about the Eglinton Crosstown is that we've also signed, for the first time, a community benefits agreement with the consortium that is building the subway, in that they have to agree to employ, train and provide apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the community who are starting in the trades. Whether it is basically doing digital work behind a computer screen or working as a plumber, welder, carpenter or common labourer on the construction site, they are now to be given some opportunities to be part of that capital investment that is taking place.

In other words, it's great to have the infrastructure project take place, but we have to think: Are there jobs for local men and women who want to work? In this community benefits agreement, which is the first of its kind in Canada, the companies that are working on this almost \$10-billion contract by the time it's completed, believe it or not—it's hard to believe that much money. That contract says that you have to give opportunities to train young men and women to get into the workforce, too. So there's a community benefits agreement along with the construction that takes place.

As we know, when we do construction projects, whether it's hospitals or whether it's roads or bridges or sewers, there is a community benefit that goes on for decades, so that people can get to work, so that people can get to health care and good public transportation. Without that kind of infrastructure, the economy will stagnate.

That's one of the reasons why Ontario, despite the challenges, is a very active, vibrant economy. It is not as vibrant as we'd like all over the province, but it is very active, compared to other jurisdictions. If you look at our capital infrastructure budget in here—over \$130 billion over 10 years—that is as much as most nation states will ever invest in infrastructure.

This is what this bill is really about. It's about jobs. It's about improving the economy, about digging subways, about building hospitals, building schools, building better roads. That is why I encourage people to look at this budget, not just in terms of a piece of paper, but in terms of an investment in the future of this incredibly hard-working province.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, I recognize the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to follow my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Obviously he is passionate about infrastructure in the city of Toronto, especially the Eglinton Crosstown project, which is something that, he's right, should have been done 10 or 20 years ago, but for whatever reason—we're not here to point fingers. It's finally happening, and it's a good thing, not only for the people of Toronto but for the economy of the province as a whole, both from a construction standpoint and also for relieving some of the gridlock. I used to live in Toronto; 30 years ago, I travelled Eglinton, and I knew then that there was gridlock, so can you imagine today?

Speaker, let me just talk about Bill 144. I want to talk about some of the specifics of the bill. Sometimes we talk about our own interests. This particular bill implements necessary changes in order to continue to implement our economic plan to build Ontario up. What does this plan include? It includes investing in people's talents and skills. It involves making the largest investment in public infrastructure, over \$130 billion over the next 10 years—the biggest in Ontario history—and creating a dynamic and innovative environment where business can thrive. I talked about the good things that are going to come out of just one project, the Eglinton Crosstown.

And of course, it strengthens our retirement security. That's something where some of us are there, and obviously we want to—not to be in a selfish way, but sometimes we forget to think about tomorrow, and we need to do a better job of that.

So why are these changes necessary as we continue to roll out our plan for Ontario? This legislation will help our economy grow and create jobs. As people work, they pay their taxes, and that certainly helps us offset some of the infrastructure discussion we've been having.

As you know, our government has committed to unlocking the value of provincial assets and making very, very clear that the net proceeds from the sale of qualifying assets will end up in the Trillium Trust. That will help fund the \$130-billion commitment that this government has made.

The Budget Measures Act, 2015, seeks to make amendments to the Trillium Trust Act, 2014, which would specify these qualifying assets. We want to make it clear that that's where that money is going to go. These amendments will help us fulfill our commitment of investing more than \$130 billion in public infrastructure across this province over the next 10 years. We want to even go beyond that \$130 billion—investments to help our economy grow and enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians.

The Budget Measures Act, 2015, also seeks to make amendments to the Liquor Control Act, to support the sale of beer in grocery stores that hopefully we'll see, Speaker, before Christmas.

We're also proposing to make amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998. I won't have the time to go into detail, but the other thing that we'll do—we're already taking action to reduce electricity cost pressures on Ontario households. This will allow that to happen.

As previously announced, we are removing the debt retirement charge from residential electricity user bills,

beginning January 1, 2016. That's in about a month and a half. If passed, the proposed amendments will end the debt retirement charge for all electricity users in Ontario by April 1, 2018.

There is a lot more that I could certainly talk about in Bill 144, but I'm going to leave some time for my good friend from St. Catharines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Much of this bill revolves around, of course, the opportunity to be engaged in a number of infrastructure projects. For the edification and information of members of the Legislature, I think they would like to know what some of those investments have been in downtown St. Catharines.

You may have noticed in the *Globe and Mail* and that a recent television report talked about the cultural renaissance in downtown St. Catharines that's taking place. That did not happen simply by accident. It is because of a number of investments which were made by various levels of government.

I can share with you that the Ontario government provided some \$18 million for the new performing arts centre. I had the opportunity to be at the official opening of the new performing arts centre, which is a marvellous structure to serve the people of St. Catharines, in particular the cultural community. Next door to it is the Brock University Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, to which the provincial government dedicated some \$26.2 million. And, as people need a place to park, the government of Ontario recognized that it could assist the city of St. Catharines with a new parking garage, for which they invested some \$9 million.

Then, coming into the city, there's an older bridge that needed replacing, and, of course, what the government of Ontario did was contribute some \$18 million to the replacement of that bridge—and also, \$1 million to the new hockey arena, or spectator facility as it is called, the Meridian Centre.

So we have seen a renaissance. Those who would have driven on Highway 406 and looked at the back of the city of St. Catharines' main street would not have been impressed 10 years ago. If they went and looked at it now, they would be extremely impressed, and the people of St. Catharines are benefiting.

That's what we're talking about when we talk about infrastructure investments, and this bill helps to ensure that there are going to be infrastructure investments taking place and that there's money for them.

People used to drive through the city of St. Catharines. They would drive in and there would be a narrowing of the QEW as they went through St. Catharines. It wasn't as safe as it should be, the roads going on and off of the QEW. In fact, the Tories used to refer to it, when I was in opposition, as the Bradley bottleneck. They were being very unkind on that occasion.

Finally, when we got a Liberal government in Ontario—

Hon. Jeff Leal: We got it fixed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We had it fixed. There was a widening that took place with the assistance of the federal government a few years back, in the early 2000s. That's a multi-million dollar project which has enhanced safety. All of these things are good, and we look forward to new projects.

I know that the people of Welland, at the other end of the Niagara Peninsula, appreciate the fact that the government of Ontario invested some \$110 million on Highway 406. There are people around here who said, "Wow, why would you invest that much money in Highway 406? It wasn't because you were the Minister of Transportation at the time?" I said, "No. There was a need there." The mayor of Welland, the chair of the regional municipality of Niagara, Peter Partington, a former Progressive Conservative member of the Legislature and a good personal friend of mine, requested that, and I said, "Peter, we can work together," because that's what we do: We work together with local government.

So part of this legislation enables those kinds of projects to take place to the benefit of all communities. And, of course, Welland is not a Liberal riding provincially, yet we put the money into Welland.

I know the people in Niagara Falls appreciated the multi-million dollar contribution the Ontario government made to their new convention centre and to their downtown transportation system, because they receive a lot of tourists.

So there have been a lot of investments taking place. What do they do? They create jobs, first of all; they stimulate the economy. In the longer run, what they do is leave a physical legacy which can be of immense benefit not only to the people of those communities but to the people who take the time to visit those communities. I'm delighted that this bill helps to enable that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to provide a couple of minutes in response to the speeches that I just heard from the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Northumberland–Quint West and St. Catharines.

1600

You know what I find very funny about this government? Actually, it's not that funny; it's sad. Here are members who over the last federal election stood up with their federal Liberal candidates, some of whom are now sitting in the federal House, and they railed against the Harper government on their omnibus bills. Yet what is Bill 144? Let me quote our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli. He said yesterday, "Quite frankly, this is nothing more than an attempt to double down on the misguided 2015 budget. This is a politically motivated, very cynical, last-minute finance bill." That's his quote. It's just hilarious that they put an omnibus bill on the order paper and they have a straight face when they try to defend it—when they try to defend individual projects.

But you know, Speaker, this is a government that has governed by closure motion. We've had 16 closure motions, and I'm going to guess, I'm going to make a

prediction, that after Thursday, when we have nine and a half hours, this government will invoke closure on probably their last rotation. If they don't do it on Thursday, they will do it very, very early in the week. That's the way they are.

This is the same government that stood up in their throne speech and talked about putting partnership over partisanship, yet they talk out of both sides of their mouth all the time. They talk one way in the House; they talk another way when they're out of this House. I tell you, you keep talking that way and things are going to change in two years and six months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's an honour to stand in the House and make comments on what the government spokespeople have just shared—their 20 minutes, done in fives, or whatever it was.

I found intriguing the member from St. Catharines talking about the Bradley bottleneck. It's good to know there's some history to that, because on this side of the House I always thought the Bradley bottleneck was when the government shut down debate, when they brought in closure, when they did time allocation, when the members on this side of the House have something to say and we stand up and we want to do 20 minutes or 10 minutes or whatever, and Mr. Bradley, the deputy House leader and Chair of Cabinet, says, "No, we're going to time-allocate this."

It's like you've got a funnel and you get that Bradley bottleneck and there's not a lot of time left to say anything because they've choked it off; they have choked off the debate at that Bradley bottleneck. It has happened time and time again in this House in the last couple of years. I just get a big kick out of it. I did not know that he was living up to his reputation of the Bradley bottleneck. I think it's great. Now we get little drips of debate as opposed to a full-fledged flow of debate.

To listen to the government members, they say Bill 144 is all about infrastructure, and if you vote against the bill, you're voting against infrastructure. Well, they can sit there and read their Fifty Shades of McGuinty or whatever it is they're reading over there, but it isn't. It isn't about infrastructure. It's about being fair to the people of Ontario and allowing everybody to stand up and have a debate without going through the Bradley bottleneck. I think that's an apt description of what we've put up with on this side of the House.

Thank you for those two minutes, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to stand here and offer a couple of comments based on the input from my colleagues from Eglinton–Lawrence and Northumberland–Quinte West and the deputy House leader and Minister without Portfolio.

This bill actually fulfills the commitments made by the government in the 2015 budget and further implements the government's economic plan on a go-forward basis as

we campaigned on in the last election: that we are about to build Ontario up.

My colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence covered just two projects in his riding. I would encourage people also to go and visit the Humber River Hospital, because it is a masterpiece in modern technology, and it is one of the hospital projects that are being built around the province. It is projects like this that are in our budget, and we intend to follow through with them.

But he also talked about the subway—or, as we all know, a light rail transit system underground—and he mentioned that in the mid-1990s there was a tunnel there already dug up. The subway was supposed to be built, and then it got filled in, and today this government is completing that job that should have been done in 1995, and probably many of us would have been using it before the millennium.

If you look around and you listen to everybody, they're talking about gridlock and how we're losing money daily because of gridlock in the GTA. Can you imagine, if this subway was built along Lawrence, along Eglinton, and it proceeded all the way to Scarborough, how many people in this city would not be driving their cars today, but would be taking public transit? It would be a lot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to add a few comments to the speeches earlier by members of the government side, one who spoke for 10 minutes and two who spoke for five minutes each. They didn't have much to say about this bill, yet it's one of the largest bills that we've seen in this House in a long time. In fact, I'm going to get a couple of them and use them for weights in the back of my truck this winter so that when the snow is on the ground I have more traction with my tires in the snow.

My colleague the critic for finance yesterday had his hour-long lead, and he talked about the omnibus nature of this bill. In fact, it amends fully 23 acts, I believe. Twenty-three acts are amended by this bill. There are 23 schedules in this bill; it amends 23 acts in one piece of legislation. This is something that throughout their term in opposition the Liberals decried whenever the government would bring in a piece of legislation that was not specific to an issue at hand and was amending several acts and had several schedules. They felt it was an insult to the Legislature to be able to bring in a bill that covered this many bases with this short a debate.

If they bring in a bill and they're required to have six and a half hours of debate on that bill, and they brought in a bill that only dealt with changes to the Electricity Act, then we would have at least six and a half hours of debate on that bill. But the reality is, we're dealing with changes to 23 acts of this Legislature, and we're only entitled to a minimum of six hours of debate. I agree with my colleague from Leeds–Grenville: The guillotine is going to come down on this bill as soon as they have the opportunity. It is the way they're doing business. That is

why we have the minister of the guillotine in here today. He's watching closely and he is waiting to bring in that closure motion. It will come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for final comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members from Leeds–Grenville, Windsor–Tecumseh, Scarborough–Rouge River and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for speaking to the bill.

I don't know what doors the members of the Conservative Party were knocking at. At the doors that I went to in helping my federal counterparts, they weren't talking about the size of bills or how bills are written. They were talking about choosing hope over fear, choosing infrastructure jobs over dividing people, and including people in Canada. That's why the Conservatives lost: because they were negative. They just tried to divide people and frighten people, whereas the Liberals under Trudeau talked about hope, talked about this great country, talked about the great people. They didn't talk about the size of bills.

Today we hear all kinds of comments about the size of this bill, yet nothing about the need to invest in the people of Ontario, the need to encourage entrepreneurship, the need to invest in building sewers, roads and hospitals, and how that builds this province and gives people aspirations to make life better for everybody in this province. That's what people want to hear. They don't want to hear about, "Oh, this poor bill. It makes me work so hard because they're going to cut off debate," and all this stuff.

Let's talk about what real people talk about. They talk about putting food on the table. They talk about paying the bills. They don't talk about the size of bills in this Legislature. They talk about the meat in the bills, which is investing in bridges, schools, hospitals and jobs. You never hear them talking about jobs. Talk about jobs for a change. That's what this bill talks about: jobs, hope, and building this province, not whining about bills.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debates?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm going to speak about Bill 144. I don't know what the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was speaking about because all of those things about putting dollars in infrastructure and about jobs in the province of Ontario—you're not addressing any of that here. Actually, you're going to be hurting the province of Ontario further. We'd like to think—

Mr. Mike Colle: What are you going to talk about, then, if not the bill?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Sure I'll talk to the bill—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, talk to the bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —because you didn't, but I will. So, Bill 144—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me, if I could just interrupt for a moment.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, my comments are towards you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I know you want to talk to the bill, but I would also ask that you talk to me. Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It would be a delight to speak towards you, Mr. Speaker.

This is 194 pages. There are 23 pieces of legislation that are going to be affected. They're things we forgot to put in the budget bill, a kind of a collection in this bill of some housekeeping—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Housekeeping?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Some of it is. It's actually 194 pages and 23 pieces of legislation, so some of that is, Minister without Portfolio—but Mr. Speaker, towards you. They're going to change some small things, which is housekeeping; it's fine with us. But the large majority of the bill affects Ontarians, actually, in negative ways—

Interjection: In your opinion.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Actually, a lot of things that I'm going to comment on I heard when I was door-knocking and speaking to the people of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, which I do all the time.

The bill affects everything from property taxes to horse racing and Hydro One—some of the top three things that I hear about all the time from the people in the riding. The changes to the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act are changes, as our critic for the Ministry of Finance, the member from Nipissing, brought up yesterday, that should actually be two separate bills. They're so important that we feel they shouldn't be in this big omnibus bill, that they shouldn't be pushed through—I say that because we talked a lot about closure; the member from Eglinton-Lawrence doesn't like to hear that, but it's when the government shuts down debate—so at least we have some time to debate them separately.

We can start the discussion—I'll be specific for the members opposite in case they were concerned that I wasn't going to speak to the bill—with schedule 2 and schedule 15. Schedule 2 amends the City of Toronto Act, 2006. But basically, I'm going to lead into why these changes, in general, are affecting all of our municipalities in rural Ontario. It's giving municipalities more taxing authority. In Toronto, they're talking about adding the flexibility on the business property tax-capping program.

In schedule 15, they're talking about the flexibility that's given in the City of Toronto Act, 2006. Now all municipalities across Ontario will have the option to increase taxes on businesses in order to cover the funds that they really should have gotten from the government, if they had managed their books properly and put the tax dollars where they need to be.

I know that my colleague from Leeds-Grenville is bringing forward a bill. On December 3, it's going to be debated. The municipal land transfer tax—basically, it is saying, "Do not give authority to municipalities to tax the people when you haven't properly managed the govern-

ment's books." The government should be helping municipalities more. I know that they're struggling.

When they gave that to the city of Toronto, the Ontario Real Estate Association, which was here yesterday—very supportive of the member from Leeds-Grenville and the great job that he has done—telling them what the impact would be in our communities. But in the city of Toronto, they estimate that, over five years, 3,227 housing transactions did not occur because of the taxing powers that they gave to the city of Toronto back in 2008.

Now that's going to ripple across all of our areas. I know that the Haliburton-Muskoka real estate board, the Kawartha-Peterborough real estate board—two of those members; three, actually—were in to see me yesterday. Top of their list: Stop that land transfer tax with serious implications across the province. Now, we all know that when someone buys a house, they sometimes renovate, change the carpets, add on additions. They figure that that will actually impact the economy greatly. They say the average homeowner spends about an extra \$55,000 when they make a house transaction. It also negatively affects the first-time homebuyers and middle-class people—young people, young families just starting out.

The Ontario Real Estate Association is a big organization. They have done a lot of studies. They have compared what's happened in Toronto, and they say how negative that is going to be if that comes in. I certainly don't need to have any less jobs in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I can tell you, there are a lot less jobs there than when I started in 2003, and that's about the same time that this Liberal government took power. When you bring in taxes, taxes, taxes, it's just another impediment to young people buying houses. It's bad for our economy. It's going to cost jobs and have a negative impact on our local economies, as it did when the city of Toronto got that power. So I wanted to put that in there and thank the member for Leeds-Grenville for being on top of this issue.

The other amendments: Schedule 6 provides another problem with the omnibus bill. It amends the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act and eliminates the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. It's never a good thing to see a government, during a time when they have not been transparent about the sale of Hydro One—and I'll touch upon that again—that they are now amending an act that supposedly ensures that the government is transparent and accountable, only to take something away from it. How transparent can that be?

The amendment will eliminate the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, which is a council of economic experts that would, in the future, be consulted on large-scale fiscal issues. As I say, it's not a good sign that this government, which has already made some financially irresponsible decisions, decides that it should get rid of a group of economists who could potentially actually help them avoid such debacles in the future. Maybe if the minister or the Premier had listened to this council of experts they would have realized the negative impacts

that the sale of Hydro One will have on our economy. Every independent officer of the Legislature has certainly made that recommendation to the government. In fact, they blatantly told them not to sell off Hydro One. Now, they're eliminating this council, so who's going to actually keep our government in place? Anybody that they can listen to? They certainly don't want to listen to us, from the calls from the government benches today when we got up to point out—which is our role in opposition—some great flaws we see in the legislation.

The two major problems that we've seen with the schedules is Hydro One and the Trillium Trust Act, as well as the new horse racing legislation. In the time I have, I'll try and speak to all of those quickly.

Schedule 3 amends the Electricity Act, 1998, in a variety of ways. It sets an end date for the debt retirement charge for commercial, industrial and other non-residential electricity users of April 1, 2018. This date is nine months earlier than they had previously estimated, but we learned from the Auditor General's report in 2011 that the DRC had actually accrued enough money to pay off the residual stranded debt. That means that the debt retirement charge, which lots of people in my riding love to talk about, should have been off a long, long time ago. It was an extra charge that was no longer necessary.

I know that the member from Nipissing, our critic, spoke to this, that basically the government has collected, I think, actually \$8 billion, if I can read his comments from yesterday. So an extra \$8 billion from the electricity users of the province of Ontario. So where did that money go? I know that we asked Dwight Duncan when he was here, and he didn't have that answer. And that was before it was even that high. We asked, "Where did that money go? The Auditor General has been asking." Nobody answered that. It goes into the big black hole of all their scandals that have occurred and that the people of Ontario are paying for.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, through you Mr. Speaker, mentioned that this is a great deal for Ontarians. They can't afford their hydro bills. So eating or heating is real. We didn't make up that line. That is a real story in most of our ridings over here in opposition. There is no question that that is a true story.

1620

I know the government has this new program out, and we—actually, my office is basically a Hydro One sub-office. We have a full-time person on Hydro One situations, from billing to smart meters. Now we have a program to help those with low income. I spoke to the Minister of Energy and he, to his credit, is making a lot of corrections in the program that was frustrating my constituents—when you go to the Legions on Remembrance Day and you have senior ladies crying because they can't access the program; you had to have a computer, you had to print the form etc.

Anyway, I'm hoping that we're helping the Minister of Energy correct those problems so that low-income Ontarians can access this little bit of money, but it is a shell game. They take the debt retirement charge off

residential and then they try and give you a little bit—to those who qualify, and it is very hard to qualify for the low-income, which is going to be just \$30 a month. But then they are taking off the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit starting January 1. So really—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bottom line, we're all paying more.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —my people are not any better off and the bottom line is, as the energy critic so vocally says in the Legislature, it's a shell game and the bottom line is, we're all paying more. People are still up against the wall on paying their bills, especially with hydro.

I know that I've gotten off track a fair bit. The difference in the bill between the stranded debt and the actual residual stranded debt with hydro—to ask us to simply trust the government that they will actually retire this residual standard debt but the Minister of Finance continues to use this collected money for other purposes—we won't know. It is, again, the lack of transparency through these minute term changes. It really only hurts the people of Ontario and the government's accountability. Again, our role in opposition: We're laying out some thoughts. Some amendments for sure are going to come forward in committee to try and adjust that to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: They'll limit committee to one day. A closure motion will take care of that.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, well, the Liberal Party doesn't want me to talk about bringing in closure so we can't have this debate, so I won't.

But the revenue from Hydro One should be able to at least, in part, pay off the hydro debt this government still holds onto. With these new provisions, the only way to still pay off the growing debt will be to increase the rates yet again. So another shell game appears. There are so many shells being moved around on the hydro desk. No wonder people are confused. All they know is that they're paying more money. We're trying to keep this government accountable and they're taking any remnants of accountability and transparency out with part of this bill.

The peak rate for hydro is 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour now. I've mentioned in the Legislature—that's unbelievable. That has gone up fourfold since I've been in. You can't ask seniors to freeze during peak hours because they can't turn on the heat because they can't afford to—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —or the dairy cows to cross their legs, because they can't be milked until after peak hours. That's just the reality. You can't tell businesses to shut down between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. and just open up at night. I know that my colleague, who used to be a dairy farmer, is over there giving some advice, so maybe they can cross their legs? It's not pretty, anyway.

We've talked about the Trillium Trust Act. My colleague has very much shown that there is no way that the government is actually selling off Hydro One and putting it into infrastructure. They're not spending any more; they're not putting any more money into infrastructure than they had said previously. Again, they're—I can't

use that word—not being truthful with the people of Ontario in that respect.

I don't have a whole lot of time left, which most people are probably happy about. I want to touch a little bit on horse racing. I have Kawartha Downs. It's in my riding, but right across the road is the member from Peterborough's riding, who is now the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. So he knows this issue quite well; don't we all in this Legislature? Not well enough, I say, because there is a part of Bill 144, Mr. Speaker—schedules 9 and 16, if people want to be exact and to keep me in line that I am speaking to the bill—that is going to allow the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, through the registrar, to make rules on horse racing, racetracks and off-track betting facilities in Ontario. It's also going to enable the registrar to issue, suspend or revoke licences for jockeys, trainers, grooms and other horse racing professionals. It's probably a little more information than some people want to know. It will establish a Horse Racing Appeal Panel to adjudicate suspected breaches of the rules and empower the Licence Appeal Tribunal to deal with appeals related to licensing horse racing. So it will bring horse racing as a government-run industry under the umbrella of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission.

It says that the Ministry of Finance can establish a grant program to support live horse racing in Ontario; again, administered by the OLG. Funding would come from the OLG; the money does not have to come from the track itself. By allowing the minister to create this new grant program, it's inevitable that they're going to leave out some tracks.

We've seen them slowly kill the horse racing industry in Ontario; there is no question. Kawartha Downs used to have 100 races; now they have 20. They've got some great management there, I have to say—their advertising and marketing—so on the nights they do race, they've had some great crowds. Just think what they could do if they were allowed to have more races and bigger purse money. They would actually be very, very successful, because they have the potential to do it. But this government has hamstrung them.

I know that they've asked for more races. They were like the poster child for trying to work without the Slots at Racetracks Program. We agreed there were some changes that needed to be made, but basically they tried to reinvigorate themselves after the Liberal government cut the legs out from under the horse racing industry. They said, "We did such a good job with 20 races; could we have 50?" Nope, the government wouldn't let them have 50 races. They kept them at the 20 or 21 races. I think they gave them a couple of extras in September, just, you know, to break bread and keep the peace.

But really, what is the future of Kawartha Downs? We've asked that question and, to be fair, they don't answer it directly about horse racing. They have these gaming bundles. We've got the Ontario Gaming East Limited Partnership. It's going to provide gaming bundles. It addresses the slots that exist at Kawartha Downs; it doesn't address horse racing.

I've had lots of people lose jobs, so I'll talk about jobs, to keep the member from Eglinton-Lawrence happy, if he's listening. I'm talking about job losses in the horse racing industry, and there are going to be more, because they are going to decrease the number of tracks that have horse racing in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, that's not right. It hurts rural Ontario.

We had an industry that was thriving; it was a world-class horse racing industry. This Liberal government has decimated it over the last three to four years, and it is going to continue to eliminate tracks, especially in rural Ontario, and I lose jobs in my riding. The people who work—the grooms, the trainers, all the people associated with the industry—want to be hard-working people and contribute to society and pay taxes. Where does someone in their fifties find another job like that in the province of Ontario? Those jobs have gone, similar to our 300,000 manufacturing jobs that have gone.

Hydro is the number one reason why businesses aren't flocking to Ontario, because it can't be competitive anymore. When they see the sale of Hydro One, they see less accountability and transparency, and they see that this government is not actually going to pay off its debt and balance the budget, that doesn't induce people to come to the province of Ontario for businesses to expand, and I can tell you it's twice as bad in rural Ontario for jobs.

When we stand up in opposition on this side of the Legislature and say these things, we really want the government to listen. They have to listen to us, because our constituents are telling us this; we're not making this story up. There are a lot of days when I feel frustrated that the government doesn't care about rural Ontario and doesn't care about what we are saying.

I'll speak for this last bit about the Tobacco Tax Act. There have been some amendments proposed, but I think the most important thing, if I can just take a moment, is that this Thursday the member from Prince Edward-Hastings is going to bring in his piece of legislation, the Smoke-Free Schools Act.

I think that we all should understand how large the contraband tobacco industry is in the province of Ontario. It is huge. I can tell you that I see tons of high school students smoking outside their high schools. Any butt survey—which means tobacco butt survey, to clarify for those watching—shows how many contraband tobacco butts there are. These cigarettes are not vetted. We don't know what is really in them. I don't encourage smoking; I'd like it stopped. But they are smoking, so they could at least be smoking legitimate cigarettes instead of contraband. What his bill addresses—because his wife Tawnya is a schoolteacher, he knows the story first-hand—is the impact that has on our children's health, but just the whole economy of getting such cheap cigarettes and we don't know what is in them. That's affecting our young people. When Quebec introduced similar legislation, they saw a 60% decrease in youth smoking when they brought in this measure.

1630

Mr. Speaker, I know that I am out of time, but basically, the Smoke-Free Schools Act is coming up this

Thursday, and I encourage all the government members to certainly vote for this. We'd like the support of the third party, too. With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to stand in this House. Today is my first opportunity to speak to Bill 144, but I'd like to concentrate on responding to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha–Leeds–Brock and—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. John Vanthof: Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Sorry. My own writing is very bad.

She touched on a lot of issues that affect rural Ontario and that are very pertinent to rural and northern Ontario: hydro, hydro costs, electricity costs. I say this with some reluctance, but we talk a lot about refugees—it's a huge issue—but in northern Ontario, we're starting to have electrical refugees: people who can't afford to heat their house and can't afford to pay their municipal taxes, which are much higher in rural Ontario. Other people say, "Well, just move." Move where? No one else is going to buy that house either.

These people are stuck, and platitudes about how we're going to—again, in my riding, we do everything we can to make sure that every person can benefit from every government program that comes out; of course we do that. But programs to help lower-income people aren't solving the problem, because electrical rates are starting to hurt all income levels. Those who can move—job creators—are moving, and those who can't move are stuck.

It's a huge, huge issue, and the sale of Hydro One is going to impact it even more. Now, when we have an electrical blackout, Hydro One actually comes to fix it. We're not a high-revenue area for Hydro One; we know that. But when Hydro One is purely profit based, how long is it going to take before somebody comes to fix your hydro? It's a huge issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. Bill 144 fulfills commitments made by the government in the 2015 budget and further implements our economic plan to build Ontario up. I feel that the changes that are made in the Budget Measures Act are extremely important.

First of all, if passed, it would enact five new statutes and amend a number of other statutes. The ones that I'm going to concentrate on right now, in my conversation with all of us here in the House, have to do specifically with transportation and also energy. Mr. Speaker, as you know, our government has committed to unlocking the value of provincial assets and placing the net proceeds from the sale of qualifying assets in the Trillium Trust. What this does, essentially, is make funds available for public infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and transit. What really happens here is that we are making

available \$130 billion for public infrastructure improvements across the province.

I recently held a transportation town hall in my riding. I held it very specifically to deal with the concerns that the members of my community have about transportation. Since this is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country, many of them are commuters and are concerned about getting to and from work as quickly as possible.

What this will do, and what this piece of our Budget Measures Act will do, is unlock some of those valuable funds that we need to make sure that people not only get to work on time but get home to their families on time. Right now, you can wind up being stuck in gridlock for periods of time that are really keeping people away from their families and from being able to get home for dinner. What this will do is ensure that we move that forward.

As far as energy is concerned, I recently had the Minister of Energy in my riding. He spoke about the retirement of the debt retirement charge, and this is huge, because this change will affect all electricity users, not just residential electricity users. This moves things up so that really small businesses—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to comment on the speech by my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock on Bill 144.

Earlier today, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence was talking about hope. Well, in the speech that we heard from my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we heard very much about fear. That is what's actually out there. People are losing hope in this province, hope that this government actually cares about them, because every time you turn around, the cost of living under this government is going up.

Governments at the provincial level have almost an unfettered ability to raise revenue. They have the power to tax. These people over here, Speaker, don't seem to understand that there's a tipping point. When you push people too far, they'll vote with their feet. They'll leave the province; business leaves the province. People can simply not afford to exist in the jurisdiction that you govern. That's what is fast happening here in the province of Ontario.

What's coming next—we're very concerned about this—is that they're going to try to shift that load and cleverly tell the municipalities, "You can now inflict a further tax on your residents with an increase in the municipal land transfer tax." The government is then going to say, "Oh, it's the municipalities that are taxing you." They're going to say to the municipalities, "We've given you these powers to tax, so now we're going to take away this source of revenue from you." And what do the Liberals then say? "We're going to balance our budget now," but they're doing it always on the backs of someone else.

They can't balance their budget by being fiscally responsible. They're going to download the taxation to the municipalities. At the end of the day, the people will

pay more, and we'll go deeper and deeper and deeper in the hole.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was looking forward to making comments on what was said by the good member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, but then I thought I should respond to a few of the things that were said by the Liberal member from Halton instead.

I got the impression from the member from Halton that we're selling Hydro to pay for infrastructure. This was our plan all along. By coincidence, I happen to have the comments made yesterday by the finance critic for the NDP, Ms. Fife, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She did a great job of researching Hansard. She went back a bit, and she really laid it out there. She said:

"In April 2014, there was a speech to the Economic Club of Canada by Mr. Sousa, who said, 'Continuing public ownership, however, remains a key priority'....

"There are ways to improve efficiency and optimize financial performance of any company, including OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.... We will not do what the previous PC government did ... with the fire sale of Highway 407."

On October 20 last year, "the Premier denied any plan to sell public hydro: Ed Clark 'has said quite clearly that he doesn't believe that selling those assets is the right answer. He has said that.'

"I believe that the leader of the third party is probably having a bit of a hard time framing the question because in fact Ed Clark has said he agrees that selling those assets is not the right thing to do"....

"On October 27—this is actually just over a year ago—Mr. Sousa replied, 'We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets.' On November 3, once again, the Premier said, 'Let's just be clear: Despite what the NDP are saying, we asked the council to retain the government's long-term ownership of these assets. In fact, what Ed Clark said, on October 17: "We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO." So, in fact, there is not a sell-off of these companies.'"

That's all in Hansard. I wanted to put that back on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for final comments.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Halton, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments.

I'm sure that the member from Halton hopes that all the things she said were actually reflected and will be that way, but I think we have to have a sense of reality, the fact that, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, there's a tipping point.

1640

I can tell you, and I've said many times, I have more poor people than I did when I first started in 2003 in my

riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I believe it was the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane who just said—I call it energy poverty, because that's how the OEB tracks it. I don't even think that that was something they tracked before this government came in. I know they're sick to death of me talking about hydro, but I have to tell you: It's the number one issue that is hurting the people in my riding and across Ontario.

Business competition is one thing. They're forcing people out of their houses. People who thought that they could retire and live in a single-family dwelling basically can't any more. I've got a lot of people who are marginal, especially in the north part of my riding, because you just can't get jobs. It's seasonal at best. I now have heat banks started up and supported by local churches. Everybody had food banks—unfortunately, people have to use them—now I have heat banks, because there was a huge need.

Up in Haliburton county, that community is wonderful. It responds to the needs of the people, but I've never seen it so rough on people that are already pressed against the wall. I thank those community people and the municipality for the heat banks that they created, but it's such a sad statement that exists in the province of Ontario today that that is what we are reduced to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Bill 144 is an omnibus bill that covers a lot of ground, but first, let me say, what an honour it is to be able to stand here in the provincial Legislature, our provincial Parliament, as the elected representative for the riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. No matter how many times I say it, it really is a humbling experience knowing that I am one of just 117 voices—117 members—of the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's 107, Percy.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, I guess it's 106 at the moment, because there's a vacant seat. That aside, our voices are all equal, no matter the political party we represent. Back home, our voters have chosen us because they had faith that we would represent them well and speak our minds as we fight for what is best for our local communities. That, my friends, is called democracy.

Let me begin by speaking about the portion of Bill 144 that deals with hydro's stranded debt and the impact this bill will have on payments in lieu of taxes. There are a few old sayings that come to mind today. British author Daniel Defoe is famous for his novel Robinson Crusoe, but he wrote another book called The Political History of the Devil back around 1725. There's a line in there that says, "Things as certain as death and taxes, can be more firmly believed." If you fast-forward to 1789 and to the American statesman Benjamin Franklin, one of his more famous quotations is the familiar "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Personally, I like Margaret Mitchell's line from her 1936 book Gone with the Wind: "Death, taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them."

Speaker, what was to be convenient was when the debt retirement charge would finally come off of our hydro

bills. We wouldn't be paying so much money for hydro. Our local distribution companies were looking forward to getting some of that money from that debt retirement charge fund by way of payment in lieu so they could charge us, their customers, less money on the local portion of their hydro bills. However, as I read the sections of this proposed bill, it seems to me, unless I am mistaken—if I am, I'm sure the minister will correct me at his first opportunity—the way I see the bill, there are surprising and unwelcome provisions with respect to the residual stranded debt and payments in lieu owed to municipalities once this debt is retired. As I understand it, currently, under section 92(4) of the Electricity Act, certain payments in lieu must start flowing to municipalities once the residual stranded debt is retired.

As you know, Speaker, currently, those payments flow to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., the OEFC. Estimates were that this debt would be retired by the end of 2018, but—and this is a big “but”—Bill 144 repeals this subsection, and instead of going to municipalities or to their municipally owned local distribution companies, the proposal in Bill 144 says that even after the residual stranded debt is retired, the money that was to go to help local DCs lower rates is instead going to continue to flow to the OEFC, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. Wow. You talk about another kick in the teeth to Ontario's municipalities.

Speaker, as you are well aware, I think we're up to 185 or 187 municipalities in the province who have already debated and passed motions calling on the Liberal government not to proceed with the sell-off of Hydro One. Yeah, yeah, yeah, we all know that all 444 municipalities, including mine, would like more money for infrastructure projects, but no one—and I mean no one—but the Liberals is actually buying their argument that that's why they are selling Hydro. We can still build infrastructure without selling Hydro.

We've done it since Ontario Hydro was first created—created and kept public, instead of turned over to private hands, I might add, by a referendum. Imagine that: People who used the distribution system actually had a say, a direct vote on whether to keep it in public hands. Wouldn't that be nice today, Speaker? That's how “good government” was conducted in the days when the province was entering the electrical age.

Now we see a Liberal government—a “not-so-good government,” if you will—going in the opposite direction, denying the people a direct vote in the future of their electrical grid. Instead, as the Liberals know, their own polling on this issue shows that 80% of the people in Ontario oppose the sell-off of Hydro One. It takes a lot of arrogance to ignore 80% of the wishes of the people—a lot of arrogance. I say that the next provincial election can't get here soon enough for those 80%, and they will have a say on the arrogance of this Liberal government.

Speaking about arrogance, the Liberals are at it again. Part of this bill screws around with the horse racing industry yet again. It wasn't enough that the Liberals closed the slots at a number of harness raceways a few

years ago, putting thousands and thousands of good, hard-working people out of work. Down in my area, that led to the closure of Windsor Raceway—3,000 jobs lost.

We don't reward that type of behaviour. That led to me being elected as a New Democrat, and I'll argue that that led to the Liberals losing their seat in Windsor West as well, and I'm sure it was a factor when New Democrats took the riding of Niagara Falls, because of the cutbacks at the Fort Erie track.

Voters can sometimes have long memories, as you well know, Speaker, and the issue of selling Hydro, just like the collapse of much of the harness racing business in Ontario, is going to come back around and bite the Liberals in their aspirational haunches. The decision on the racing sector brought devastation to the men and women who breed horses in these province. It caused havoc—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Withdraw your aspiration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Your play on words is somewhat borderline, especially when you were putting the emphasis on certain elements of the words. I would ask that you proceed cautiously and choose your words perhaps a little more selectively before I ask you to withdraw anything. At this point in time, you're all right.

I ask you to continue. Thank you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I will aspire to do better.

It caused havoc with those who earn their living as blacksmiths, veterinarians, grooms, trainers, drivers; those who sell tack, harnesses, carts and trailers; those grow hay and straw and feed; and even those who build and sell pickup trucks. And for what? Thousands of people who gave their lives to a sport they loved were devastated. They worked hard—damn hard—for little pay. Many of them are in harness racing for the love of the sport, and they had it all ripped out of their lives by a stupid, stupid political decision that wasn't based on solid and sound information whatsoever. There was no warning, no consultation. The Liberals have paid and will pay the price for that, and rightfully so.

1650

They could have improved the industry, but instead of putting people in place to improve and grow the business, they devastated it. Now they're taking it away from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and handing it over to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. I don't know that this is a necessarily a bad thing. Maybe they should have done it a while ago. Maybe that's where the accountability problem was. Who knows?

We do know that the Premier put it in her mandate letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. She said the minister would be “Continuing to work with other ministers and partners to support a sustainable, customer-responsive horse racing industry that supports jobs and local economies; and to integrate horse racing within the broader Ontario gaming strategy.”

I'll come back to the Premier's mandate letter in a moment, Speaker, because there's some pretty good stuff

in there that I hope will help me prove a few points about the harness racing industry down my way.

I know in my area we are looking for more changes than just shifting responsibility to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. We have been proving ourselves, proving that harness racing has a future in the 100 Mile Peninsula, as well as right across southwestern Ontario.

Speaker, as you know, the Lakeshore racing group has been given permission to run 14 races at the Leamington Fairgrounds the last couple of years. I know you know because I've seen you at the track. Leamington is a half-mile track. Each Sunday the handle taken in is \$20,000 or more, proof positive that a new, not-for-profit track is feasible in the Windsor-Essex county area.

Imagine, Speaker, if the Lakeshore racing group was allowed to run a few more races in the summer months; just imagine if they were allowed to open an off-track betting site, or two, three or even five. We used to race 150 days in southwestern Ontario when Windsor was open. The purse money was \$11.5 million in 2011. Now with just 46 race dates across the southwest at Dresden, Hiawatha and Leamington, the purse money is \$1.6 million. Imagine what revenue the province could bring in by believing in the Windsor-Essex county area again: believing in families, believing in horse people, believing in family farms, believing that a new track along Highway 401 and Lakeshore or in Tecumseh would prove a tourist draw for harness people from Michigan, Ohio and right across Ontario.

Speaker, there is no shame in admitting to a mistake. All could be forgiven if the Liberal government saw its way to saying, "You know what? We made a mistake. We didn't get this right. There is a future for small harness tracks in Ontario, and we're going to prove it by allowing a new, not-for-profit track down in the Windsor area."

Speaker, believe in the horse people, the breeders like my friends Bob and Veronica Ladouceur who run St. Lad's Farm down in Ruscom in Essex county in the riding of Essex. They're the nicest people you'll ever meet, salt of the earth. They have a tremendous record of successful racehorses bred for the North American harness racing industry, and they're bred right here in Ontario.

I was thinking of them just the other day when I went back and reread the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That's because she wrote of the need to work with other "ministers and partners to continue to engage with rural stakeholders," and to "deliver effective programs." Well, Bob and Veronica are waiting for that conversation. They certainly are rural stakeholders. They know the need to develop rural economies. She wrote about creating "new opportunities" and how she wanted to "champion to secure a future for people across our province." The Ladouceurs would like to meet with the Premier and chat about a secure future at St. Lad's Farm. They would like to know more from the Premier about her plan that would

place "emphasis on partnerships with businesses, communities and people to help foster continued economic growth," and they would like to know what she had in mind when she talked about making a "positive impact" on their lives.

Speaker, in her letter the Premier said they would be engaging "people on the issues that matter the most to them," and that "meaningful solutions" would be implemented to their "shared challenges." Well, great, because the Ladouceurs are struggling every day to hang onto their farm and their breeding business, and they'd love to hear from the Premier, because what matters most to them is their livelihood. They see it as a shared challenge, since Liberal decisions have rocked their world and devastated their business. It cost the jobs of nine people who used to work for them; some of them on retraining opportunities to get off the welfare system.

Bob and Ronnie would be delighted to see how the Premier is going to grow the economy and help create good jobs, because they agree with her: Creating good jobs and growing the economy are fundamental to building more opportunity and security for their future. They accept the Premier at her word when she says that strategic investments in the talents and skills of our people are a critical priority. They have the talent; they have the skill. They run a successful business, and had for many, many years before the Liberals did away with the small racetracks in this province and created such uncertainty about the future of the horse racing business. They have the innovation and the creativity, and they are willing to partner with the province to foster greater prosperity.

If the Premier wants to grow the economy, create jobs and invest wisely in initiatives that strengthen Ontario's competitive advantage, they're up for that challenge. Her mandate letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs could have been written with them in mind. Give them a call. They're in the book: St. Lad's Farm in Ruscom, Ontario. The member for Essex and I will gladly host the Premier or the minister on a tour the next time they get down to our area. It doesn't matter that the industry will be shuffled off to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. We'll take them on a tour as well.

While you're down our way, meet with Tom Bain. Tom is the mayor of Lakeshore. He's also the warden of Essex county. He's a good Liberal, as far as I know. He owns standardbred race horses. He trains them; he drives them. He's 100% behind the move to expand the racing dates at the Leamington Fairgrounds, as the minister well knows. He's a driving force behind the fight to get a new non-profit raceway built in the Windsor-Essex region. He knows it can be successful.

We know it can work and pay for itself. We just need the okay; the Premier's stamp of approval, if you will. Give us four or five teletheatre sites for off-track betting so that we can raise some money. Give us back what you took away. Give us back those jobs. You want to grow the economy? You wish to create jobs in Ontario? You want to find willing partners to work with in rural parts

of the province? Come on down. We'll even leave the light on for you, Minister. It's pretty dark down there these days. Our unemployment rate is among the highest in the country.

This bill, Bill 144, is the Budget Measures Act. How do we measure the minister's bill? Martin Luther King said it: The measure of a man is taken not at times of comfort and convenience, but at times of conflict and controversy—conflict and controversy, Speaker. Closing down an industry with a controversial decision certainly threw us into conflict. Some 3,000 jobs were lost in Windsor and Essex county, and more in Chatham-Kent. Marriages suffered, people lost their dignity, people lost the family farm and people lost their dreams—that's the hardest part. Young people moved away to look for work in other provinces.

The consequences of your political decisions reach far and wide. You have a chance to do something about that. Do it now. There's no shame in changing your mind. There's no shame in reversing a bad decision. There's no shame in admitting a mistake. Open your minds. Open your hearts. Listen to the hard-working men and women of Essex and Windsor county and Chatham-Kent. Listen to Bob and Veronica Ladouceur. Listen to Warden Tom Bain. Listen to Brian Tropea at the Ontario Harness Horse Association. Listen to Ken Hardy or Donnie Rankin Jr. or Mark Williams or any of the other drivers and trainers. Talk to veterinarians such as Dr. Paul Branton. All they're saying is, give them a chance to prove to you that they can make this work. They can get us back on the track of rebuilding the local economy—pun intended, Minister.

We need a new racetrack. We have the talent, the skill and the determination to make it work. We need a willing partner. The Premier's mandate letters say you want to work with others to create jobs and grow the economy. Well, change this budget bill. Take out the word "may" when it comes to working out a better deal for the horse racing industry. Replace those "mays" with "will" and "shall." A small change in wording, but a huge change for a better future for the horse racing industry in Ontario.

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And while you're at it, change your mind on selling off Hydro One. There's no need for it. There are very few people in the province who support you on that—right now about 20% or less. Listen to the people. For once, just listen to the people of this great province. You don't have to sell Hydro. You don't have to keep the tracks closed that you shut down and threw so many people out of work.

We hear in the Legislature, day after day, how the priority for the government is to grow the economy, create jobs and bring Ontario up. Well, bring up our part of the province. Give us back those 3,000 jobs. Give the people their dignity back. Bring the young people back to the province from Alberta and Saskatchewan and British Columbia—places they had to go to find work because when you closed the tracks, you put the farms out of

business. You put so many people out of work; so much devastation in the families. This can change. With the stroke of the pen, the Premier's stamp of approval, you can just say, "You're right. We made a mistake. We're going to correct it. Let's do it now."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh. I just want to comment on a few of the things that have been said, not merely by him, but by some of the others this afternoon.

I think I want to start off in the quick two minutes with a question. What do you think they're talking about with regard to electricity south of the border? The answer is rapidly rising electricity rates. Whether you're talking about the US eastern seaboard or the US Great Lakes basin or California or the US southwest—Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona—the big issue is high and rising energy prices. Does this sound a little bit familiar? And how is that the case? Well, 10 years later than we did, most US electrical utilities are realizing that their wires are old, that they need to turn off their coal plants, they need to move to renewable energy—wind power is the fastest-growing thing in Texas and in California—and their nuclear plants need refurbishment.

Among the things that are happening south of the border is that US electrical utilities are doing now what we did 10 years ago. Here's how to compare it: What we did is over the past 10 years, we bought tomorrow's electricity infrastructure at yesterday's prices, financing it at nearly 0% interest rates. In the United States, the problem they're facing is to buy today's electrical assets at tomorrow's prices, at interest rates that have nowhere to go but up. So in addition to facing rising interest rates, our brethren in the United States are also facing a situation in which they have to take their nuclear reactors off-line, they've got to take their coal plants off-line, and they've got to finance it all at tomorrow's interest rates. It makes what we've done here over the last 12 years look pretty good by comparison and puts it all into perspective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: In 1953, there was a movie, Stalag 17.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Oh, William Holden.

Mr. John Yakabuski: William Holden and Otto Preminger. Well, we have our own 17. It's called closure 17—a little movie here in the Legislature. This will be the 17th time under the Kathleen Wynne Liberals in this Parliament that they will have invoked closure on a bill. We just received a copy of the motion. Tomorrow we'll be debating closure.

So here we have—Otto Preminger was Colonel von Scherbach. Well, here we've got captain closure and general guillotine at work in the Ontario Legislature, once again shutting down democracy. Barely did we hit 6.5 hours of debate on this omnibus bill—167 pages of legislation, and they have come in here with a closure

motion. Tomorrow, we won't be debating Bill 144 anymore.

The debate is over on second reading of Bill 144. The debate is over. We're going to be debating a closure motion—once again, democracy at work in Liberal Ontario. Hey, bring in an act that amends 23 different pieces of legislation and let the members of the Legislature debate it for six and a half hours, and three of that is taken up in lead speeches by the three parties.

That is unbelievable. I've seen a lot of closure motions, but I didn't expect to see one, Speaker, on a bill of this magnitude. My colleague from Nipissing has been fretting about this since it was introduced. A massive bill and they are shutting debate off after a mere, barely six and a half hours. This is unconscionable and yet—and I see—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Look at that: Lucas Malinowski—Lucas, in the under press. He's laughing, but he knows that this is terrible legislation. This is an awful way to run a Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: A hard act to follow, sir, but I would like to concentrate, in my couple of minutes here, on the remarks from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, because for those of you who had the opportunity to listen, it was one of the best, well-thought-out representations of what ill-thought-out legislation does to a community. He focused on the horse racing sector. I remember I had just gotten elected when the whole slots-at-racetracks debacle happened. Coming from a farm, I knew we were dealing with farm people, we were dealing with animals, and what the government did was, they threw uncertainty into the industry—mass uncertainty into an industry that was actually making the government money. Does that sound familiar? Let's wreck something that's actually making money.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: And Ontario Northland.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, Ontario Northland wasn't making money, but they wrecked it. With the horse racing industry, it actually wasn't costing Ontarians money. It was actually bringing a dividend to the government, and they threw a monkey wrench into it, and as a result, people of rural Ontario suffered greatly. In my region, we lost Sudbury Downs. We've lost the breeders around Sudbury Downs, and a lot of people lost their market for hay. Many people who had been contributing to society in a very meaningful way lost their jobs.

Now the government comes with this, and all of a sudden we see horse racing again. Bill 144 and the government—the member from Windsor–Tecumseh made a very good commentary that there are lots of "mays" regarding horse racing in this bill, and they should be replaced by "wills" and "shall," to remove the uncertainty on what could and should be a very vibrant industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 144. Specifically, I want to speak about the amendments that deal with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act, 1999. Mr. Speaker, in my riding, we have Mohawk raceway, so I often have conversations with people in the horse industry and get a chance to really find out from them some of the challenges that they are facing. I want you to know that one of the things that these amendments do is that they put the Ontario Racing Commission underneath the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Why? Well, it really assists when it comes to industry governance, and it also enhances long-term sustainability. This is about improving safety in the industry and ensuring we are doing the right thing when it comes to the industry.

This will also allow people in the industry to be able to tap into those tools that the OLG is able to access. For example, it will help the industry grow. It will help it grow and also help it modernize. How? Well, a couple of ways: It will allow people in the industry to be able to now use more modern techniques that the OLG is able to use when it comes to advertising and marketing, simple things but things that can really impact on the industry. For example, under the OLG and with the tools that will now be available, people in this industry will be able to have horse racing-themed products available. They will also have opportunities at their fingertips when it comes to ads and being able to run ad campaigns, things they were not able to do under the old system.

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What this really does is modernize the industry, and it allows the industry to grow and succeed. This is good for the industry, good for Ontario and good for our economy. Essentially, it's going to be good for places like the Mohawk Racetrack, which is in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for final comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to all the members who spoke: the members for Mississauga–Streetsville, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Timiskaming–Cochrane and Halton.

The member for Mississauga–Streetsville was talking about electricity rates in America, I guess. I didn't mention that, but he chose to talk about that, which gives me another opportunity to say this to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: When you come down our way, down to Leamington and Kingsville and Essex county, and you talk to greenhouse growers, we're going to get a transmission line down there, but it's not coming until 2018. They've already told us that 40 people want to tap into that new power that's coming, and it still won't be enough. The demand is there, the business case is there, for twice or three times what's being offered at the moment. It would pay for itself if they would only supply the power. The greenhouse industry wants to stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and they can't do it because there's not enough power for them.

We've already lost one of the major growers. He went over to Ohio, where they rolled out the red carpet. They gave him practically free power—free hydro, practically—to open up a million-dollar industry over there and hire a whole bunch of people. I talked to another grower, Paul Mastronardi, just last week or the week before. He's this close to doing the same thing, this close to pulling the trigger on a deal in Ohio, because he can't get power from Ontario. Surplus power from Ontario is being given away to Ohio, and he wants to keep it here. He wants his industry here, his employees here to grow, and he can't do it because there's no power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record this afternoon. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

It is great to hear from my good friend from Windsor-Tecumseh, because my daughter, Shanae, is on the St. Peter's grade 11 basketball team in Peterborough. They won COSSA. They will be heading to Windsor tomorrow for OFSAA; all the OFSAA championships will be in Windsor. She'll have the opportunity to utilize the brand new opened Herb Gray Parkway going into Windsor.

To my friend from Nipissing, I've given serious consideration to cancelling my subscription to Fedeli financial, but I am going to give him the opportunity to give me a bit of a deal in order for me to continue to subscribe to that famous business publication in the province of Ontario.

Edward R. Murrow, the famous American journalist of the 1950s and 1960s, once provided some advice to President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He said, "An error does not become a mistake until you refuse to correct it."

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh spent a lot of time talking about horse racing. I'm going to devote my remarks today to horse racing in the province of Ontario.

After the decision was made to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program, we appointed a panel to look at horse racing in the province of Ontario: the honourable John Snobelen, the honourable Elmer Buchanan and the honourable John Wilkinson. An interesting commentary from John Snobelen, who at one time served on the treasury benches right over here: He said that the Slots at Racetracks Program was not transparent and was unaccountable. So he was an advocate for making changes to it. My good friend Elmer Buchanan, who resides in the riding of Peterborough, was on the treasury benches over here from 1990 to 1995. He was the NDP agriculture, food and rural affairs minister for five years, from 1990 to 1995. Along with John Wilkinson, they were the authors of a report on the future of horse racing in the province of Ontario. We took the recommendations from that report. We put a five-year TPP in place to sustain horse racing. We're now in the process of looking for the next five years to bring stability to both the standardbred, thoroughbred and indeed the all-important breeding industry in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the prices we're getting from yearlings has now recovered. In fact, the average price for yearlings has now increased again, because we brought some stability to the industry in the province of Ontario, and that is very important.

I actually go to racetracks in the province of Ontario. One night, I was at the track that's part of my riding, Kawartha Downs. I actually went to the back stretch. I was hauling buckets of water, buckets of oats and horse blankets to really talk to the—

Mr. Mike Colle: Horse what?

Hon. Jeff Leal: —blankets—to really talk to the grassroots people who are in standardbred racing in the province of Ontario. In fact, the good folks at Kawartha Downs, on October 30, had a pace in my honour, the Jeff Leal pace. It was the eighth race, a \$6,000 purse, and at the end of the race, they allowed me to go out to put a cooler on the winning horse, because they wanted to recognize that all of us working together have brought back stability to horse racing in the province of Ontario.

Is there more work that needs to be done? Yes, and we're involved in that right now. But one of the key recommendations from the panel—from Mr. Snobelen, Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Wilkinson—was to integrate horse racing and gaming regulation out of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and dissolve the Ontario Racing Commission.

I always made the argument, whether you bet \$5 on Yankee Nick in the sixth, whether you play blackjack or you put money in one of those darn machines, gaming is gaming is gaming in the province of Ontario, and that's why it needs to be integrated. Part of Bill 144 is to facilitate that integration—very important.

It also allows the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, through the Registrar of Alcohol, Gaming and Racing, to make rules for horse racing—very important—racetracks and off-track betting facilities in Ontario, and it enables the registrar to issue, suspend and revoke licences for jockeys, traders, grooms and other horse racing professionals. We're very concerned about animal safety in the province of Ontario, and this is a key element of the changes we want to make to the Horse Racing Licence Act, 2015.

It also establishes the new Horse Racing Appeal Panel to adjudicate suspected breaches of the rules and empowers the License Appeal Tribunal to deal with appeals related to horse racing. This is a very important aspect, this integration. The Ontario lottery corporation just recently announced a vice-president for racing in the province of Ontario, and we'll be looking at initiatives to co-brand between gaming in Ontario and horse racing in Ontario to effectively use the marketing power of the Ontario lottery corporation to bring people to racetracks in the province of Ontario.

This past summer, I indicated that I've had the opportunity to visit racetracks. Attendance is up, wagering is up and confidence is back in horse racing in the province of Ontario. This is work in motion, and we'll continue to make that happen. In fact, I have been to Leamington,

Ontario. I have visited the racetrack in Leamington, Ontario. I talked to my good friend Tom Bain, and we'll certainly entertain any proposals that we have for that area.

Interesting enough, to my good friend from Windsor-Tecumseh, I'm also a graduate of the University of Windsor. I actually spent a little free time that I had as a student going to Windsor Raceway, so I was very familiar with that—

Mr. Mike Colle: Oh, shame. You should have been studying.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes. My mother used to inquire whether I was studying.

But I've been to that racetrack—

Mr. Mike Colle: The trots, or the—

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a standardbred track. But I think there is good opportunity in Leamington. Horse racing is part of the heritage of the province of Ontario. You think of Colonel Sam McLaughlin from Oshawa. You think of E.P. Taylor. It is certainly a very important part of our heritage in the province of Ontario.

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Mr. Mike Colle: Sandy Hawley.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sandy Hawley, the famous jockey; the McDonalds, who race at Mohawk raceway. It's very important for rural development in our community because those people who are involved in the smaller tracks, like Kawartha Downs in Peterborough county, they buy the Ford F-150s, they acquire veterinarian services, they acquire feed and they are real engines in many of our local communities.

I am pleased that, through Bill 144, we're starting the process of integration. That was one of the key recommendations of the panel, from Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Snobelen and, indeed, Mr. Wilkinson. So I just want to make sure that—

Mr. Mike Colle: You should mention E.P. Taylor. He helped build the racetracks.

Hon. Jeff Leal: E.P. Taylor helped to build the modern—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You should mention Woodbine.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —the modern Woodbine.

I think it's all-important that members on all sides of this House have a real interest in the sustainability and the long-term viability of horse racing in the province of Ontario. I wanted to take my time to address those aspects of the bill, Mr. Speaker, and now I'll turn it over to my good friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Mr. Gravelle.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Oh, I'm sorry. I was a little bit excited to get up, Mr. Speaker, but thank you very much for recognizing me and thanks to my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who made some incredibly important points about a couple of

aspects of Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, that are crucial to move forward. I know that he worked very, very hard to put that in place in terms of the horse racing industry, and is not only familiar with, but was really one of the guiding forces behind it, so I congratulate him.

I'm very pleased to support this legislation. There are a number of aspects to it that I think really, really are important. I listened to the opposition—as we all do; we listen to each other in the Legislature—and recognized that their approach is one of trying to, quite frankly, not move very quickly at all. They don't have an eagerness to move forward on these important measures and the fact is that there are pieces in this legislation that are incredibly important to move forward on.

I, quite frankly, could go on about a number of aspects of it. I do want to reference specifically the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act—that's the indexing factors, which are really important. From the moment I first got elected in 1995—like all elected provincial members, you reach out to all organizations and you try very hard to make sure that you establish the fact that you represent all the people, that you represent all the issues.

One of the first groups that I became close to was the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group and the injured workers' support groups across the province. One of the issues that has been really important to them has been the issue of indexation on the disability benefits. In this legislation, if it's passed, we will be adjusting benefit indexation for all injured workers on disability benefits beginning January 1, 2018. They will receive full consumer price index benefits, CPI benefits, on an annual basis—with no upper limit, by the way, depending on what the cost-of-living adjustment is each year. That's a really big issue. We're making interim adjustments until that period of time.

This has been an interesting and long crusade, one that I know means a great deal to almost everybody here in the House. I suspect everyone works very closely with the injured workers' support groups in their communities. That certainly has been the example for me.

In fact—this is a bit of a side note and probably not a necessary one, but what the heck—the president of the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, a fine gentleman by name of Steve Mantis, ran against me as the NDP candidate in 2011—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How did he do? How did he do?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: He gave me a heck of a run, too, may I say. It was a tough race; that was an interesting election. But what's most noteworthy from my perspective is that we were friends going into the election—I recall, actually, when he phoned me and told me he was running and asked my opinion, I said, "Actually, I'd prefer you didn't." The bottom line is that we remained friends throughout the campaign as well, and had a good race.

But I do recall one of the debates where—despite the fact, I think, that Steve and others would say that they wished that we had been able to move forward more

quickly on a number of things, when we had a situation during one of the debates where somebody was actually critical of the work that we were doing on behalf of injured workers, my opponent publicly stated, "Michael has worked very hard on behalf of the injured workers' support group." It meant a lot to me at that time. We've been fighting a long time to make this happen.

That's pretty darned important. That's part of this legislation, and we need to move forward on it. Obviously, there are other significant pieces of legislation that are coming forward that are so important.

The larger aspect of Bill 144—and there are unquestionably a number of pieces to it that are very significant, and I appreciate that there may be some criticism related to some of the pieces of it. But like many members, I've looked at it pretty carefully and I'm pretty pleased with the measures being put forward.

Ultimately, when you look at the entire grasp of the legislation, it really is about continuing our plan to build the province up, to build Ontario up. It implements necessary changes that continue to implement that economic plan that we have. That plan—we've said it before, but I think it's worth saying again—very much includes investing in people's talent and their skills.

It absolutely is crucial to us being in a position to continue forward with our plan to make the largest public sector investment in public infrastructure—over \$130 billion over the next 10 years, which is the largest in Ontario's history. That, I think, is how you do create a dynamic, innovative environment where business thrives. May I say an important aspect of this as well is our determination, I hope with the support of all members in the House, to strengthen retirement security.

But focusing, if I may, for a moment or two on the significant increase in infrastructure spending, I speak very much as a northerner. I speak as the MPP for Thunder Bay-Superior North. Yes, I'm privileged to be in the position I am in terms of our Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, but as someone who has represented a riding that is as vast as Thunder Bay-Superior North, you become conscious of the infrastructure challenges for every single community, and certainly you see them for the highway system.

We're proud of the fact that through the northern highways program, over the last 10 years we have invested over \$5 billion—that's billion with a "B"—in our northern highway structure. In our last budget, even with all the fiscal challenges we had, there was still a clear understanding from our government, from the Minister of Finance and from the Premier, that those infrastructure dollars needed to continue to be spent—I think around \$580 million in our northern highways program—which has allowed us to continue to move forward on the rebuilding of our bridges and our key structures that need to be built on. That is not inexpensive, but it's crucial in terms of maintaining our systems. It certainly is crucial in terms of rehabilitation of the highway system.

May I say we are working very hard to expand, which in many cases means four-laning a number of the

sections of the highway, with a determination to do more. How can we do that? We need to have the infrastructure dollars in order to do that while at the same time focusing on our commitment to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

Our infrastructure plan—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: And get the snowplows to clean them in the winter.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Snowplowing is a pretty important one as well. My colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh, I believe it is, referenced it. I've been watching it really closely. I'm going off track, but I can't resist. I've got all my constituents out there in Thunder Bay-Superior North reporting in to me on a regular basis. We had our first snowstorm of the year about 12 days ago. In fact, it was during constituency week, and I was driving myself up to Beardmore to open up their new municipal offices—actually, not that new, but to officially open them. We got into the middle of the storm and I got to see the actual level of road maintenance. I was very pleased that indeed—I know Minister Del Duca is absolutely committed to seeing the best possible high level of road maintenance throughout the province. It means a great deal to us in northern Ontario. I look at my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane. I know it means a great deal there as well. It's really important.

As I say, I've got constituents—I bet we all do—who are reporting in. May I say I'm grateful for all that.

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The bottom line is, though, in terms of the infrastructure, it means so much to our communities. Each and every municipal leader—I cannot go to a municipal gathering—whether it's in northwestern Ontario with the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, NOMA, which many of my colleagues know very well, and Dave Canfield, the president and mayor of Kenora; or FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, the northeastern Ontario version of NOMA with Al Spacek, mayor of Kapuskasing as president; and all the hard-working, dedicated municipal leaders who continue to tell us how important it is that we recognize that their infrastructure needs must be met, and that's what we're doing. That's why we are pleased that, again, Minister Del Duca has been able to find a way to bring the Connecting Links program back. That's a huge improvement. We're going to keep working on building that up. I can promise you that. But the bottom line is, it's back and that's really important. It makes a huge difference, again, to have that program back.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane is suggesting we need more. You know what? We actually always need more. Getting the program back was very important. May I say something that Premier Wynne was committed to doing? She understands the needs of the north so well and has made it very clear to all of us, not just the northern members, that the priority in terms of economic development and growth really is in northern Ontario, and we're all focused on that.

The bottom line is, we have a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, is going to position us to help us continue

to build the province up. That's hugely important to all of us. Again, I understand the legislative process and I certainly understand the debate that goes on, and that is what makes us a great democracy. I stand here proudly, speaking about a piece of legislation that will enable us to absolutely move forward and continue to build the province up. I will surely be spending my time continuing to work, particularly with my northern colleagues, to make sure we make the right decision in terms of those infrastructure needs, and there are many.

The bottom line is, this legislation is a crucial part of that. I'm going to do the best I can to always be the hardest-working member I can as an MPP. Thank you very much for the thumbs up.

I look forward to working with all of you as we all seek the same goals, which is to make Ontario the greatest province in the country and obviously a great jurisdiction for all of us. We're honoured to be here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to now encourage questions and comments.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's always a privilege to rise to talk about the various issues in this Legislature, but this one, I have to say, Speaker, is one of severe concern. People in the general public may not fully understand or appreciate what just happened here today. This bill is now what's called "time-allocated." That means this bill is going to be cut off from debate. Everybody in this Legislature is simply not going to have a chance to be able to comment on it. We already saw, yesterday, that this government does not want to talk about this bill. The minister himself, in the debate, where he had an opportunity to speak at length, for an hour, spoke 16 minutes, and it's all over.

Here we have a chance for each member to stand and speak and give their thoughts for 20 minutes. We did not see that from the Liberals, and I can tell you why. I talked about it yesterday when I had the opportunity to speak for an hour. Page 3, section 7, schedule 22: This gets to the nub of the issue, that the funds from the sale of Hydro One are never going to be used for transit. It says here that those funds may be used to fund or to reimburse the crown for the construction of infrastructure.

What we've been standing in this Legislature and saying now for months, for weeks and for days, is that the money they keep talking about—and they give these eloquent speeches about, "Don't you really want that infrastructure?" Of course people do. It was budgeted in 2014 and it was re-budgeted in 2015. We've proved beyond a doubt that that money is going to be used to attempt to balance their budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to offer some comments on the remarks that were given to us by the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Northern Development.

In some ways, I'm going to echo what the member for Nipissing just said. I found it interesting that there were

23 schedules in this 169-page bill and we heard very, very little about any of those schedules. We heard about the horse racing industry, we heard about the importance of transit in northern Ontario, but we didn't hear a word about two of the most significant and troubling schedules in this legislation. Those are schedule 3, the amendments to the Electricity Act, and schedule 22, the changes to the Trillium Trust.

What we see here is this government putting in place the legislative framework it requires to push ahead with its privatization of Hydro One which, as we know, the overwhelming majority of Ontarians oppose; 188 municipalities have passed resolutions calling on the government to keep Ontario's electricity system in public hands. All of us I'm sure—on that side of the House as well—are receiving emails on a daily, hourly basis from constituents who do not want to see this privatization move forward. And yet, the government in this bill puts in place the legislative authority it needs to move full steam ahead and remove the authority over Ontario's electricity system from the citizens of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to address this issue of—whether it's broadening the ownership of Hydro One or money going into the green fund, the absolute silliness of some of the positions taken, especially the member for Nipissing's.

We're putting \$130 billion into infrastructure. The last Premier in Ontario to do that was John Robarts, and I wasn't even out of elementary school. The previous government that the member seems to like so much spent \$1 billion a year on infrastructure in Ontario. That couldn't even replace the feeder sewer systems in a major city. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, we spent more on infrastructure than the entire province of Ontario did.

For 40 years in Ontario, we were spending less than 1% on infrastructure. What happened was our population doubled. We didn't see subways. We didn't see highways. We didn't see hospitals. This province spent less on infrastructure by about one quarter of what every other province was.

Now we have the problem that all that stuff that was built in the 1960s and 1970s is old. It's older than I am, and it's falling apart. The repair bills are enormous on this generation because governments for 40 years in Ontario shortchanged Ontario, artificially, so called, kept taxes down while creating the most enormous infrastructure deficit in North America.

I am proud that we are spending the same level of funding that we haven't seen since Drew and Robarts, which was the legacy of the party opposite. Thirteen billion dollars a year takes every single extra penny we can scrape together, and because we're not jacking prices up, we're making tough decisions. Broadening the ownership, which quite frankly is not something new—these kinds of partnerships are commonplace. The oppositions couldn't make a tough decision if it walked up and slapped them in the face.

If you actually do the macro math, you cannot have \$13 billion a year. Why? Because we're getting 5% of GDP, which every economist tells us is the minimal investment in infrastructure to grow jobs and attract business, and that's the right answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Once again, the Minister of the Environment is trying to change the channel when we are actually debating Bill 144. This is about shutting down debate of a major budget bill—167 pages, 23 schedules, which, for the listeners who are paying attention to this debate, actually means legislative changes. We're opening up 23 schedules. I am greatly concerned that after the absolute minimum—six and a half hours of debate—the government has chosen once again to shut down the debate on a budget bill that covers 23 schedules and 167 pages. If you are so proud of Bill 144, if this is so important to you and it leads to such important decisions, then let us debate it. You should not be ashamed of it, and all you're doing is shutting down debate.

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What we want, in opposition, is the opportunity to highlight what is in this 167-page legislation. You are not letting us do that. That's what we're concerned about. That's what we're raising. Instead of actually talking about what's in Bill 144, talking about how it impacts our communities and the horse racing industry and Ontario Hydro and on and on and on, we are once again talking about shutting down debate, not letting people discuss what is actually in this budget bill.

There is no reason, Speaker, that after six and a half hours of debate, three hours of which is taken up by the Liberals and the critics for the PCs and the NDP—we actually have only debated this for less than three hours. It's unconscionable to me that you can suggest that there has been sufficient debate on Bill 144 after six and a half hours, and I think you should be embarrassed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Now back to the minister for final comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleagues on all sides: the member from Nipissing, the member from London West, my colleague the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and indeed the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

I want to just talk about one section that's crucial. It is the Horse Racing Licence Act, 2015. Right now—after we came back from the panel's recommendation, we put a five-year plan in place to provide financial stability to horse racing in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, we're now into year three of that plan, and anybody in this House who spends some time at the racetrack knows that the breeding industry works on a three-year cycle. So what we're really planning now is beyond the five years. We're actually looking at eight years because of the three years that needs to be built in because of the breeding cycle both for standardbreds and thoroughbreds in the province of Ontario. That's why this section, the Horse Racing Licence Act, 2015, is so crucial as part of the

integration program: to get it in place as quickly as we can to give that confidence to the breeders in the province of Ontario to allow those racetracks to start planning now and beyond for the next decade in the province of Ontario. That's exactly why this provision of the bill is in there.

It's interesting that the opposition members ask questions about horse racing. You would think that if they were really committed to the industry, they would make sure that this part of this bill got through as quickly as possible to bring stability to the industry, to allow the industry to start to move forward, and, indeed, to provide the confidence in the breeding side of the industry that is so important for horse racing in the province of Ontario.

Ontario has a reputation of being one of the centres of horse racing in North America. Our yearlings, both on the standardbred side and the thoroughbred side, are much sought after by people around the world because they have confidence in what we're doing in horse racing in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to actually have a chance to contribute to this debate because, as we've heard, it is very, very disturbing that this government, after only six and a half hours, has chosen to close it down and cut it off because, quite frankly, they've been caught. For the people who are watching here today, we're talking specifically about Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. Well, quite frankly, the manner in which this government is acting and the omnibus approach that they've taken just really doesn't measure up. Who's going to pay for it at the end of the day, Speaker? It's going to be the Ontario taxpayers.

In case people want to know more about it, it's essentially a 194-page pieced-together hunk of legislation that is going to do something that people cringe about. This 194 pages is essentially, in summation, going to be taking opportunity to debate legislation out of this House because their goal is to remove actions of this government away from debate and into regulations.

When I spoke to stakeholders today about the essence of this bill, whereby there will be less legislation and more regulation, they cringed. They just shake their heads. When I have stakeholders saying, "We want to be part of establishing a vision for a go-forward plan for Ontario," and then they hear that that's going to be taken away from them and regulations behind closed doors will continue to be prescriptive and handcuff them in terms of how they move forward with their respective industries—the stakeholders are saying, "Enough. This government has just gone too far."

I agree with my colleague the member from Nipissing. The reason they have actually cut off debate and time-allocated it is the fact that they've been caught. To everyone watching today, I encourage them to grab the bill, Bill 144, and on page 162, to be specific, under section 7 is the information that my member, the finance critic, has caught on to, and this is why they're closing

down debate. They've been ousted, and they're absolutely shameless in saying, "Okay, we've got to shut this down before too many people have a chance to talk about it and Ontario taxpayers catch on to what we're really trying to do."

Specifically, on page 162, under section 7, it says:

"Amounts not exceeding the balance in the Trillium Trust may be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the following purposes:

"1. To fund, directly or indirectly, costs relating to the construction or acquisition of infrastructure"—but here's the crutch, Speaker;

"2. To reimburse the crown for expenditures incurred by the crown, directly or indirectly, for a purpose described in paragraph 1."

So, again, Speaker, they're ousted; they've been caught; they're busted. This is not about new money to build infrastructure, and they're shameless in shutting us down and taking away our opportunity to increase awareness of what this government is really doing.

I'm going to use my time, actually, that is available to me to talk about this a little bit more. Bill 144 contains 23 schedules which impact—I'm going to list them all because the fact of the matter is that people need to know exactly what's rolled up in this particular piece of legislation, because it's a worry; every single schedule is a worry: the Assessment Act, the City of Toronto Act, the Electricity Act, the Escheats Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act—that's rich because, in a spirit of fiscal transparency, you would think they would want more debate on this particular piece of legislation; but, no, yet again they closed it down.

Actually, Speaker when I say that, I feel I need to remind the listeners that this is the 17th time since Premier Wynne has taken office that they've closed down debate. This is undemocratic. It needs to be brought to an end. She's going at a pace that is—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Unprecedented.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you. It's unprecedented. Nobody else has moved at shutting down democracy at a pace like Premier Wynne has.

The other schedules involved in this affect the Forfeited Corporate Property Act, the Government Advertising Act, the Horse Racing Licence Act—and I thank my colleague, my seatmate from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. She spoke about how this Liberal government had no idea what they were doing and, as a result, totally killed off the horse racing industry. I appreciate the comments from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh as well. You know, it's a shame that this government's knee-jerk reactions, time and again, wreak havoc across Ontario.

I think about my own raceway in the riding of Huron-Bruce, the Clinton Raceway—wonderful management, wonderful support, but they had their race days cut back and, as a result, some of the most successful horse farms in Ontario, in my riding, have sold their horses. I thought it was interesting, just moments ago, the Minister of Agriculture himself said that initiatives coming through

this omnibus bill were going to build stability for an industry that's already left the stable. It's gone, Speaker. The horse racing industry, as we once knew it in Ontario, will never be again, and that is shameful.

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Some other acts that this particular piece of legislation impacts are the Income Tax Act, the Interim Appropriation Act for 2016-17, the Labour Relations Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, the Liquor Control Act, the Municipal Act. With regard to the Municipal Act, really, Speaker, it's interesting.

Just yesterday, we had great discussions with stakeholders from OREA. These realtors are very, very concerned over the haphazard manner in which this Liberal government is saying to municipalities, "Look, you may choose, or maybe you don't want to choose to implement a municipal land transfer tax." Well, what's that going to do across Ontario in terms of consistency and making home ownership dreams a reality? Again, they come up with quick ideas, quick thoughts because they're so cash-strapped, and at the end of the day, all they do is squash hopes, whether it was dreams for growing successful horse farms and a racing industry in this province or buying a home. It just doesn't stop with this government.

Again, this particular legislation, Bill 144, is impacting the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act and the Pension Benefits Act. Last week, we had a number of small table discussions in my riding, and time and again ORPP came up with regard to concerns that small business has regarding building a future. Again, what do small business owners want to do? They want to be successful. They want to raise a family. They want to enjoy a good quality of life. But unfortunately, again, that particular dream, those particular hopes get squashed by the cavalier attitude this government has as it rams through legislation and rams through regulations, all because they cannot control their spending and they're desperate to generate revenue wherever they can, all on the backs of Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers. It's absolutely shameful.

Other acts that are impacted by Bill 144 are the Securities Act, the Supplementary Interim Appropriation Act for 2015-16, the Taxation Act, the Tobacco Tax Act, the Trillium Trust Act, as well as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I commend my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings. He's coming forward on Thursday with a private member's initiative that actually takes good steps forward in terms of addressing contraband tobacco. If this government was really serious, they would take hold of his ideas that he's bringing forward with his PMB and actually do the right thing.

This is what this government is found out to be. It's a government that's so cash-strapped, it never, ever does the right thing anymore, Speaker; it never, ever does. Whether it's the taxation associated with the pricing of carbon—we can't trust that they're going to get that right, for goodness sakes. If they were very serious about transparency and doing the right thing for Ontario, for goodness sakes, in this particular bill alone, under

schedule—I just need to double-check here. Under schedule 22, where they talk about the Trillium Trust, they would actually identify that perhaps the Trillium Trust would be an appropriate place to put revenue generated from the sale of carbon credits. Instead, no, they missed that opportunity. We don't have details.

There was a big announcement today about their commitment to tackling climate change, and when challenged for details—"There's got to be more to this announcement than just an announcement about an announcement"—they had nothing. Seriously, if they were going to be taking proper steps forward to address climate change and the carbon credits, they would have included the opportunity to put funds into the Trillium Trust. Instead, what do we have? It's a desperate attempt at a garage sale. Again, we have a cash-strapped government that's looking to generate funds wherever they can. Hydro One limited shares are going to be sold off. Hydro One Brampton shares, OPG headquarters real estate, LCBO headquarters real estate, OPG's Lakeview Generating Station—the list goes on. It's a garage sale. They're desperate. And who's going to pay at the end of the day? Ontario taxpayers.

This is a piece of legislation that is very extensive—hundreds of pages, as I said. One of the most significant worries that I have and my caucus colleagues share is the lack of transparency and the aggressive timeline. We talked about that already. It's a concern: How much more are they going to ram down our throats in their attempt to scurry and cover up their actions?

But we have very good critics. Our finance critics hold this government to account time and again with regards to specifically the second-last page of the legislation, where they're outed. They've been busted. We're going to hear so much more about other aspects of this legislation, because they don't want to talk about how they've been busted by their misuse of Ontario tax dollars and their need to find more dollars to cover their tracks.

In that regard, one of the most concerning aspects of the amendments the government is trying to ram through are the changes to the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. This government actually wants to eliminate the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, a body that was mandated back in 2004 to provide, upon request of the minister, advice relating to macroeconomic forecasts and assumptions to be used to prepare the budget and the related fiscal plan.

It's interesting, Speaker. Seemingly, they're wanting to shut down debate today so when it comes to Thursday, when we hear about a fall economic plan and accountability that is over two weeks late, you know—it's a

smoke show is what I'm trying to say, I guess. They're shutting down debate on Bill 144 and they are going to be ramming things through at a quick pace on Thursday because the fact of the matter is they are going to miss their mark. This fall, the economic statement that we're going to hear is going to prove what we've known in opposition all along: The track that this government is on is the wrong track, and they can't make their knee-jerk actions measure up to delivering a budget that's going to be on track.

It begs the question: When they're eliminating the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, what are they trying to hide? What do they want to keep from the public? What are they doing that is causing them to miss their financial projections? This government frequently seems to be trying to accelerate legislation that seems to benefit no one but themselves. We've talked a lot about that today—myself, our colleagues and the folks in the third party. But as I said, in the case of Bill 144, one can only assume they are ramming it through the House either because they forgot to include a majority of proper changes in the 2015 budget and they're trying to cover that up, or we really do have bad news coming in the fall economic statement.

I'd also, in my time, while we're discussing this bill today, like to touch a little bit on the Tobacco Tax Act. The proposed amendments would see a number of changes implemented. The first would be the clarification of how the taxable price of cigars is determined when the retail dealer is also a wholesaler, importer or manufacturer of cigars. It would also require registrants to provide information to the Minister of Finance in respect of raw-leaf tobacco that is damaged, lost, stolen, imported or exported. Lastly, it would seek to create baling and labelling requirements in respect of raw-leaf tobacco.

It's interesting. A former roommate of mine who I went to the University of Guelph with, she and her husband are tobacco farmers. They are just shaking their heads at the continued regulation that is being thrown at them time and again. Every fall, the Minister of Finance makes grand statements about how he will crack down on contraband tobacco, but when push comes to shove, he never acts.

I think that sums up this government: They never take the proper action on behalf of Ontario taxpayers.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member will have additional time next debate time.

Since it is now 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Tara Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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